

THE
TESTIMONY AND PRACTICE
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN REFERENCE TO
AMERICAN SLAVERY:
WITH AN
APPENDIX:

CONTAINING THE POSITION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (NEW
SCHOOL), FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REFORMED PRESBY-
TERIAN, ASSOCIATE, ASSOCIATE REFORMED, BAPTIST,
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL, AND METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCHES.

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PREFACE.

WITH extreme diffidence, the present volume is presented to the public. The author feels that he exposes himself to the charge of presumption, in asking the attention of the community. He would simply allege, as an apologetic consideration, his desire to promote the interests of Zion, and especially that branch of it to which he is attached, from clear conviction and strong preference. He would also state, that providential circumstances, over which he had but partial control, first turned his attention to the subject treated, and strongly impressed upon his mind the importance of communicating, in some form, correct information, and inculcating right principles, in reference to them. This impression was strengthened by the concurrent conviction of a number of his brethren, with whom he counselled. He hoped that, by this means, the progress of schism might be stayed, the Presbyterian Church vindicated from some aspersions cast upon her, and her whole energy enlisted more fully in efforts to give the blessed gospel to our "domestic heathen;" that they might be brought to enjoy that "freedom wherewith Christ makes his people free," and prepared for civil freedom, whenever God in his providence shall secure it for them.

He is aware that his work lies open to criticism in some points. Prepared under the constant pressure of pastoral duties, and without time for much revision or

polishing, it cannot but have defects. For these he asks the forbearance of critics, and hopes they may not prove material hindrances to the usefulness of the work. If, in a few instances, he repeats, it must be attributed to his desire to fasten upon the minds of his readers, certain truths that seem wholly lost sight of by those who plead for secession. He embraces this opportunity of acknowledging his great obligations to the stated clerks of the Synods, and others, through whose kindness he obtained the documentary portion of the work, save that which he extracted from the minutes of the General Assembly. The historical sketch he gathered mainly from the records of the Presbyterian Church. For some statistical information, and the history of the early efforts of the Church on behalf of the slaves, he is indebted to pamphlets published by Drs. W. S. Plumer and C. C. Jones. That the great King and Head of the Church may own and bless his feeble efforts to stay the progress of schism, withstand the onsets of fanaticism, establish the truth, unite the people of God, and call forth their energies in a scriptural, vigorous, and persevering effort to remove the plague spot of slavery from the land, and secure the salvation of its down trodden victims, is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

ASHLAND, Ohio, 1852.

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INTRODUCTION.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.*

THE Presbyterian Church, as an organized body in the United States, took its rise at a date subsequent to the establishment of the Puritans, Roman Catholics, Quakers, and Episcopalians. Most probably individuals of this denomination had emigrated to this country at an early period, and were scattered throughout the colonies. But they were not sufficiently numerous in any single place to constitute a congregation. The Puritans were driven to this country by persecution. They came to the wilds of America, subjected themselves to all the privations and sufferings consequent upon leaving their native land and settling in the unbroken forests of this country, inhabited only by savage beasts and more savage men, in order to enjoy, untrammelled and unmolested, the worship of God according to the convictions of their own consciences. The Presbyterians at that time resided principally in Scotland and Ireland. They enjoyed in peace their religious rights, and were therefore not compelled by any necessity, nor had they any strong inducement to emigrate to the wilds of America.

*See Records of the Presbyterian Church.

But soon after the restoration of Charles the II, the Presbyterians of Scotland and Ireland experienced a severe persecution. The monarch aimed at nothing short of the entire subversion of Presbyterianism and the imposition of Episcopacy upon Presbyterians. Efforts for the accomplishment of this object were relentlessly pursued until the accession of William the III to the throne of England. During this period many sealed their attachment to Presbyterianism with their blood. The American Provinces thus became a desirable refuge for those who dare not, but at their peril, worship God in the forms to which their convictions led them. Many availed themselves of this refuge.

The first churches organized in this country under the Presbyterian form were situated in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The original proprietors of these provinces had secured religious liberty. Of the organization and early history of these churches little is known. As nearly as can now be ascertained, the first Presbyterian church in this country was organized in Philadelphia about the year 1698. And it is probable that the churches at Snowhill, Rehoboth, Monokin, and Wicomico, on the eastern shore of Maryland, were organized about the same period.

The Presbyterian Church in America, as an organized body, does not date farther back than the year 1705, or 145 years since. In that year the Presbytery of Philadelphia was formed. It consisted of seven ministers. This continued to be the only judicatory of the Church until the year

1716, when it was divided into four Presbyteries; and these four were formed into a Synod, called the Synod of Philadelphia. This Synod continued to manage successfully the affairs of the Church for a number of years. After the lapse of several years a painful diversity of opinion arose in reference to certain measures, which, while one party regarded as important to the progress of religion, the other condemned as dangerous innovations. This difference produced dissensions. And these dissensions resulted, in 1741, in an extensive schism, and the erection of the Synod of New York. These Synods existed separately until the year 1758, when they were re-united under the title of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. From this period until 1789, this Synod constituted the supreme judicatory of the Presbyterian Church. Under its control the Church prospered. In the year 1788 the Synod divided itself into four Synods, and made arrangements for the organization of the General Assembly. That body met for the first time in May, 1789. And from that time until the present, a period of sixty-one years, it has conducted successfully the affairs of the Church as its chief judicatory. As the Church spread, diversity of views in reference to questions of expediency necessarily arose. A difference of opinion arose in the Presbytery of Cumberland, in Kentucky, regarding the necessity of a liberal education as a qualification for the ministry, which resulted, in 1810, in the secession of eight or ten of the members of the Presbytery, and the organization of the

Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Under the Divine blessing the Church prospered much for a number of years succeeding this period. A plan of union with Congregationalists had been adopted, by which congregations composed partly of Presbyterians and partly Congregationalists, and having but a partially Presbyterian organization, were entitled to a representation in her judicatories. By this means errors of doctrine and improprieties in practice crept into the Church. These began about the year 1830 to produce unpleasant agitations. These continued until 1837, when an open rupture occurred which carried off nearly one-half the entire membership of the Church. There went out from the Church at that time 1,181 ministers, 1,286 churches, and 100,850 members. And there remained 1,243 ministers, 1,823 churches, and 128,043 members. The Church, prior to the division, consisted of 2,424 ministers, 3,109 churches, and 228,893 members. Since the division she has gone forward harmoniously and prosperously. She now consists of 207,254 members, 1,926 ministers, 2,595 churches, 127 Presbyteries, one of which is in China and three in India, and 23 Synods, one of which is in India. She has also her Boards organized for the prosecution of the work of benevolence. The Board of Education assists indigent young men in preparing for the ministry, and encourages common school, academic and collegiate education. The Board of Domestic Missions supplies the destitute of our own country with the preached gospel, and assists in the erection of houses

of worship. The Board of Publication furnishes and circulates through the Church and the country an evangelical literature. Some of the noblest productions of the human mind in our language are circulated by this Board. The Board of Foreign Missions gives the gospel to the heathen. All these Boards have been organized in their present form within the last half century, and the two latter within a few years. They are yet in comparative infancy, but are doing a great work for the building up of Zion. These, with all the interests and operations of the churches, are controlled by the General Assembly.

CHAPTER I.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHIEF JUDICATORY OF THE CHURCH ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

1. THE SYNOD OF NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA.—A body such as the Presbyterian Church, holding the Scriptures to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and embracing in the form of its organization the highest principles of rational liberty, might be expected to notice and bear decided testimony in reference to the institution of Slavery. And, accordingly, the attention of the highest Judicatory of the Church was early called to the existence, and character of Slavery in this country.

In May, 1787, the following overture was presented for the consideration of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, viz.:

“The Creator of the world having made of one flesh all the children of men, it becomes them as members of the same family to consult and promote each other’s happiness. It is more especially the duty of those who maintain the rights of humanity, and who acknowledge and teach the obligations of christianity, to use such means as are in their power to extend the blessings of equal freedom to every part of the human race.

“From a full conviction of these truths, and sensible that the rights of human nature are too

well understood to admit of debate, overtured that the Synod of New York and Philadelphia recommend in the warmest terms to every member of their body, and to all the churches and families under their care, to do everything in their power, consistent with the rights of civil society, to promote the abolition of Slavery, and the instruction of the negroes, whether bond or free."

This overture received the careful consideration of the Synod. Their deliberations resulted in the following action on the subject :

"The Synod of New York and Philadelphia do highly approve of the general principles in favor of universal liberty that prevail in America, and the interest which many of the States have taken in promoting the abolition of Slavery ; yet, inasmuch as men, introduced from a servile state, to a participation of all the privileges of civil society without a proper education, and without previous habits of industry, may be in many respects dangerous to the community ; therefore they earnestly recommend it to all the members belonging to their communion to give those persons who are at present held in servitude, such good education as to prepare them for the better enjoyment of freedom ; and they moreover recommend that masters, whenever they find servants disposed to make a just improvement of the privilege, would give them *a peculium*, or grant them sufficient time and sufficient means of procuring their own liberty, at a moderate rate ; that thereby they may be brought into society with those habits of industry that may render them useful

citizens; and finally, they recommend it to all their people to use the most prudent measures consistent with the interests and the state of civil society, in the countries where they live, to procure eventually the final abolition of slavery in America."

2. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.—Two years after this action of the Synod the General Assembly was formed. And four years after the formation of the General Assembly, in 1793, the subject of Slavery was brought before it. The Assembly simply adopted and re-published the foregoing paper passed by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, as an expression of its own sentiments on the subject.

Again, two years afterwards, in 1795, the subject was brought before the Assembly. The following overture was presented:

"A serious and conscientious person, a member of a Presbyterian congregation, who views the slavery of negroes as a moral evil, highly offensive to God and injurious to the interests of the gospel, lives under the ministry of a person, or amongst a society of people who concur with him in sentiment on the subject upon general principles: yet for particular reasons hold slaves, and tolerate the practice in others: ought the former of these persons, under the impressions and circumstances above described, to hold christian communion with the latter?"

This overture was answered thus:

"Whereupon, after due deliberation, it was

"*Resolved*, That as the same difference of opinion with respect to Slavery takes place in sun-

dry other parts of the Presbyterian Church, notwithstanding which they live in charity and peace according to the doctrine and practice of the Apostles, it is hereby recommended to all conscientious persons, and especially those whom it immediately respects, to do the same. At the same time, the General Assembly assure all the churches under their care that they view with the deepest concern any vestiges of slavery which may exist in our country, and refer the churches to the Records of the General Assembly published at different times; but especially to an overture of the late Synod of New York and Philadelphia, published in 1787, and re-published among the extracts from the minutes of the General Assembly of 1793, on that head, with which they trust every conscientious person will be fully satisfied."

The General Assembly did not act again on the subject until the year 1815. The Synod of Ohio, and also some Elders in other parts of the Church, then petitioned the Assembly on that subject. These petitions were referred to a committee to report thereon; and the final action of the Assembly was in these words:

"The committee to which was committed the report of the committee to which the petition of some Elders who entertain conscientious scruples on the subject of holding slaves, together with that of the Synod of Ohio concerning the buying and selling of slaves, had been referred, reported; and their report being read and amended, was adopted, and is as follows, viz :

“The General Assembly have repeatedly declared their cordial approbation of those principles of civil liberty which appear to be recognized by the Federal and State governments in these United States. They have expressed their regret that the slavery of the Africans and their descendants still continues in so many places, and even among those within the pale of the Church; and have urged the Presbyteries under their care to adopt such measures as will secure, at least to the rising generation of slaves within the bounds of the church, a religious education, that they may be prepared for the exercise and enjoyment of liberty when God in his providence may open a door for their emancipation. The committee refer said petitioners to the printed extracts of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, for the year 1787, on this subject, re-published by the Assembly in 1793; and to the extracts of the minutes of the Assembly for 1795.”

After quoting fully this extract, which is given above, the Assembly proceed:

“This is deemed a sufficient answer to the first petition; and with regard to the second, the Assembly observe, that although in some sections of our country, under certain circumstances, the transfer of slaves may be unavoidable, yet they consider the buying and selling of slaves by way of traffic, and all undue severity in the management of them, as inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel. And they recommend it to all the Presbyteries and Sessions under their care, to make use of all prudent

measures to prevent such shameful and unrighteous conduct.”

In 1816 the Assembly passed a resolution which relates remotely to this subject. The following is the act of the Assembly:

“The committee to which was referred an inquiry proposed to the Assembly by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, relative to the notes found in the book containing the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, reported, and their report, being amended, was adopted, and is as follows, viz.:

“That the book referred to was first published with nothing but the simple text, without any scripture proofs, or any notes of any description whatsoever. This is evident, not only from the minutes of the General Assembly, but from the numerous copies of this first edition of the standards of our Church, which are now in existence. It is also equally evident, from examining the records of the General Assembly, that not a single note in the book has been added to, or made a part of, the Constitution of the Church since it was first formed and published in the manner above recited. Several alterations and additions have been made, by referring them when contemplated, to the Presbyteries for their decision thereon in the manner pointed out in the Constitution itself. But among all the points thus referred, there is not found a single note which now appears in the book containing the Constitution of the Church. Hence it follows beyond a doubt, that these notes are no part of the

Constitution. If, then, it be inquired how these notes obtained the place which they now occupy, and what is the character as to authority which they possess, the answer is this: When a second edition of the standards of our Church was needed, it was thought by the General Assembly that it would be of great use in itself, highly agreeable to members of our Church generally, as well as conformable to the example of the Church of Scotland, from which we derived our origin, if the Scripture proofs were added in support of the several parts and clauses of the Confession of Faith, Catechisms and Form of Government. A committee was accordingly appointed by the Assembly to select the Scripture proofs, and to prepare them for being printed with the second edition of the book. The work of this committee was the following year referred to another, and ultimately, the committee charged with preparing the Scripture proofs reported, along with these proofs, the notes which now appear in the book, and which were approved by the General Assembly, and directed to be printed with the proofs in the form in which they now appear. [The book was thus published in 1797.] These notes, then, are explanations of some of the principles of the Presbyterian Church given by the General Assembly, and which, of course, the General Assembly may modify, or altogether exclude, at their pleasure; whereas, the articles of the Constitution must govern the Assembly themselves, and cannot be altered or abrogated but in the manner pointed out in the Constitution itself.

“On the whole, in the book containing the standards of our Church, the text alone contains the Constitution of our Church; the notes are an exposition of principles given by the highest judicatory of that Church, of the same force while they continue with the other acts of that judicature, but subject to alterations, amendments, or a total erasure, as they shall judge proper.

“*Resolved*, That as it belongs to the General Assembly to give direction in regard to the notes which accompany the Constitution of which they are the supreme judicatory, this Assembly express it as their opinion that in printing future editions of the Constitution of this Church, the parenthesis in the note on this part of the Form of Government which defines a Synod, and which is expressed in these words, ‘since a Synod is only a larger Presbytery,’ be omitted, as well as the note connected with the Scripture proofs in answer to the question in the larger Catechism, ‘What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?’ in which the nature of the crimes of man-stealing and slavery is dilated upon.” [The note referred to declares, after having cited 1st Tim. 1: 9, 10, “This crime, (man-stealing,) among the Jews, exposed the perpetrators of it to capital punishment, Exod. 21: 16, and the Apostle here classes them with sinners of the first rank. The word he uses in its original import comprehends all who are concerned in bringing any of the human race into slavery, or retaining them in it. Stealers of men are all those who bring off slaves or free men, and keep, sell or buy them.”]

“In regard to this last omission the Assembly think it proper to declare, that in directing it they are influenced by far other motives than any desire to favor slavery, or to retard the extinction of that mournful evil as speedily as may consist with the happiness of all concerned.

“*Resolved*, That the foregoing resolution, with the report of the committee sanctioned by the Assembly on the same subject, be printed and connected with the last edition of the Confession of Faith, Catechism, Forms of Government, &c., of this Church.”

Again, after the lapse of two years, in 1818, the subject was again presented before the Assembly. The following resolution was then offered, viz.:

“*Resolved*, That a person who shall sell a slave, a member of the church, who shall be at the time of sale of good standing in the church, and unwilling to be sold, acts inconsistently with the spirit of christianity, and ought to be debarred from the communion of the church.

After considerable discussion the subject was committed to a committee consisting of Dr. Green, Dr. Baxter, and Mr. Burgess, to prepare a report to be adopted by the Assembly, embracing the object of the above resolution, and also expressing the opinion of the Assembly in general as to slavery. The committee to which was referred the resolution, &c., reported, and their report was unanimously adopted, and referred to the same committee for publication. It is as follows, viz.:

“The General Assembly of the Presbyterian

Church, having taken into consideration the subject of slavery, think proper to make known their sentiments upon it to the churches and people under their care. We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ, which enjoins that ‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system; it exhibits rational, accountable, and immortal beings in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action. It exhibits them as dependant upon the will of others, whether they shall receive religious instruction; whether they shall know and worship the true God; whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the Gospel; whether they shall perform the duties and cherish the endearments of husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors and friends; whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity, or regard the dictates of justice and humanity. Such are some of the consequences of slavery—consequences not imaginary—but which connect themselves with its very existence. The evils to which the slave is always exposed, often take place in fact, and in their worst degree and form; and where all of them do not take place, as we rejoice to say that in many instances, through the influence of the principles

of humanity and religion on the minds of masters, they do not, still the slave is deprived of his natural right, degraded as a human being, and exposed to the danger of passing into the hands of a master who may inflict upon him all the hardships and injuries which inhumanity and avarice may suggest. From this view of the consequences resulting from the practice into which christian people have most inconsistently fallen, of enslaving a portion of their *brethren* of mankind—for “God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth”—it is manifestly the duty of all christians who enjoy the light of the present day, when the inconsistency of slavery both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavors to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout christendom, and if possible throughout the world.

“We rejoice that the Church to which we belong commenced as early as any other in this country the good work of endeavoring to put an end to slavery, and that in the same work many of its preachers have ever since been, and now are, among the most active, vigorous and efficient laborers. We do indeed tenderly sympathize with those portions of our Church and our country where the evil of slavery has been entailed upon them; where a *great* and the *most virtuous part* of community

abhor slavery, and wish its extermination as sincerely as any others; but where the number of slaves, their ignorance, and their vicious habits generally, render an immediate and universal emancipation inconsistent alike with the safety and happiness of the master and the slave. With those who are thus circumstanced, we repeat, we tenderly sympathize. At the same time, we earnestly exhort them to continue, and if possible, to increase their exertions to effect a total abolition of slavery. We exhort them to suffer no greater delay to take place in this most interesting concern than a regard to the public welfare truly and indispensably demands.

“As our country has inflicted a most grievous injury upon the unhappy Africans, by bringing them into slavery, we cannot indeed urge that we should add a second injury to the first by emancipating them in such manner as that they will be likely to destroy themselves or others. But we do think that our country ought to be governed in this matter by no other consideration than an honest and impartial regard to the happiness of the injured party, uninfluenced by the expense or inconvenience which such a regard may involve. We therefore warn all who belong to our denomination of christians, against unduly extending this plea of necessity; against making it a cover for the love and practice of slavery, or a pretence for not using efforts that are lawful and practicable to extinguish the evil.

“And we at the same time exhort others to forbear

harsh censures and uncharitable reflections on their brethren who, unhappily, live among slaves whom they cannot immediately set free: but who at the same time are really using all their influence and all their endeavors to bring them into a state of freedom as soon as a door for it can be safely opened.

“Having thus expressed our views of slavery, and of the duty indispensably incumbent on all christians to labor for its complete extinction, we proceed to recommend, (and we do it with all the earnestness and solemnity which this momentous subject demands,) a particular attention to the following points:

“1. We recommend to all our people to patronize and encourage the society lately formed for colonizing in Africa, the land of their ancestors, the free people of color in our country. We hope that much good may result from the plans and efforts of this society. And while we exceedingly rejoice to have witnessed its organization among the *holders of slaves*, as giving an unequivocal pledge of their desire to deliver themselves and their country from this calamity of slavery, we hope that those portions of the American Union whose inhabitants are, by a gracious Providence, more favorably circumstanced, will cordially, and liberally, and earnestly co-operate with their brethren in bringing about the great end contemplated.

“2. We recommend to all the members of our religious denomination, not only to permit, but to facilitate and encourage the instruction of their slaves in the principles and duties of the christian

religion, by granting them the liberty to attend upon the preaching of the Gospel, when they have the opportunity; by favoring the instruction of them in Sabbath schools, wherever those schools can be formed, and by giving them all proper advantages for acquiring the knowledge of their duty both to God and man. We are perfectly satisfied that, as it is incumbent on all christians to communicate religious instruction to those who are under their authority, so the doing of this in the case before us, so far from operating as some have apprehended that it might, as an excitement to insubordination, would, on the contrary, operate as the most powerful means for the prevention of those evils.

“3. We enjoin it on all church sessions and Presbyteries under the care of this Assembly to discountenance, and as far as possible, to prevent all cruelty, of whatever kind, in the treatment of slaves; especially the cruelty of separating husband and wife, parents and children, and that which consists in selling slaves to those who will either themselves deprive these unhappy people of the blessings of the Gospel, or who will transport them to places where the Gospel is not proclaimed, or where it is forbidden to slaves to attend upon its institutions. The manifest violation or disregard of the injunction here given, in its true spirit and intention, ought to be considered as just ground for the discipline and censures of the church. And if it shall ever happen that a christian professor in our communion shall sell a slave, who is also in communion and good standing in our Church, contrary

to his or her will and inclination, it ought immediately to claim the particular attention of the proper church judicatories; and, unless there be such peculiar circumstances attending the case as can but seldom happen, it ought to be followed without delay by a suspension of the offender from all the privileges of the church, till he repent and make all the reparation in his power to the injured party.”

In a note the Assembly also re-published at this time the minute adopted in 1787 by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, on this subject.

In the year 1819 the following overture was submitted to the Assembly, which, being read and amended, was adopted, viz.:

“The objects and plans of the American Society for colonizing the free people of color of the United States, having been stated to the General Assembly, and the same having been considered and discussed, the Assembly resolved that in their opinion the plan of the society is benevolent in its design, and if properly supported and judiciously and vigorously prosecuted, is calculated to be extensively useful to this country and to Africa.

“The situation of the people of color in this country, has frequently attracted the attention of this Assembly. In the distinctive and indelible marks of their color, and the prejudices of the people, an insuperable obstacle has been placed to the execution of any plan for elevating their character, and placing them on a footing with their brethren of the same common family. In restoring them to the land of their fathers, the Assembly hope that

the way may be opened not only for the accomplishment of that object, but for introducing civilization and the Gospel to the benighted nations of Africa. From the information and statements received, the Assembly believe that the proposed colony in Africa may be made a powerful auxiliary in the efforts which are making to abolish the iniquitous traffic in slaves carried on in Africa, and happily calculated to lay the foundation of a gradual emancipation of slaves in our own country, in a legal and constitutional manner, and without violating the rights or injuring the feelings of our southern brethren. With these views the Assembly feel it a duty to recommend the American Society for colonizing the free people of color of the United States, to the patronage and attention of the churches under their care, and to benevolent individuals throughout the Union."

In 1824 a communication was received from the American Colonization Society, requesting the Assembly to recommend to their churches to take up, on the 4th of July next, being the Sabbath, a collection for the said society. After considering this communication, the Assembly adopted the following resolution, viz.:

"*Resolved*, That whilst the Assembly still highly appreciate the object of the Colonization Society, they deem it most expedient to leave the churches and individuals under their care to the exercise of their own discretion on this subject."

In 1825 the following action was taken on this subject:

“The General Assembly having witnessed with high gratification the progress of the American Colonization Society, in a great work of humanity and religion, and believing that the temporal prosperity and moral interests of an extensive section of our country, of a numerous, degraded, and miserable class of men in the midst of us, and of the vast continent of Africa, now uncivilized and unchristian, are intimately connected with the success of this institution; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That this Assembly recommend to the churches under their care, to patronize the objects of the American Colonization Society, and particularly that they take up collections in aid of its funds on the 4th of July next, or on the Sabbath immediately preceeding or succeeding that day; and wherever such course may be thought expedient, to give their assistance in such manner as may be most conducive to the interests of the general cause.”

The same preamble and resolution were re-adopted by the Assembly in 1826. The Society was commended to the patronage of the Church in 1830, 1831, and 1833.

The attention of the American people began, about the year 1830, to be called more distinctly to the subject of slavery by the formation of anti-slavery associations, and the discussion of the subject in periodicals and by public lectures. These associations and their agents manifested much enthusiasm and some fanaticism. And for a time a violent mobocratic spirit, worthy of the severest

reprehension, was excited against them. Especially did the bitterness with which they denounced indiscriminately all slave-holders, excite a corresponding spirit of bitterness on the part of southern men and slave-holders. In the midst of this excited state of feeling, and this mutual denunciation between the North and the South, the subject came frequently before the General Assembly.

In 1835 memorials and petitions from individuals, on this subject, were presented to the Assembly and referred to a committee, whose report, and the whole subject, were referred to a committee to report to the next General Assembly. This committee were divided in sentiment, and presented, in 1836, two reports. After some discussion the following motion was made and carried :

“Inasmuch as the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, in its preliminary and fundamental principles, declares that no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority ; and as the urgency of the business of the Assembly, and the shortness of the time during which they can continue in session, render it impossible to deliberate and decide judiciously on the subject of slavery in its relations to the Church ; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That this whole subject be indefinitely postponed.”

The years 1837 and 1838 are memorable for the passage of what is called the excommunicating act, and the secession of those who now compose the New

School Presbyterian Church. No action was taken on the subject of slavery during these years.

The following resolution was offered by the venerable Dr. Alexander, in 1839, and passed by the General Assembly, viz.:

“Resolved, That the General Assembly, approving the objects of the American Colonization Society, and rejoicing in the success which, by a gracious Providence, has been granted to this benevolent enterprize thus far, would renew the commendation to the churches under their care formerly made, to take up a collection to aid the funds of said society, on or about the 4th day of July, annually.”

Again, in 1841, some papers on the subject of slavery were put into the hands of the committee of bills and overtures of the Assembly. When this committee reported, a motion was made that one or more of the papers be read. But after some debate, the whole matter was indefinitely postponed.

An overture from the Presbytery of Chillicothe, on the subject, was presented to the Assembly in 1842. And the motion that it is inexpedient for the General Assembly to take any action on the subject, was postponed until the next Assembly.

This motion came up regularly again in 1843, and was laid on the table. An overture from the Presbytery of New Lisbon in relation to the religious instruction of the slaves, was referred to the Board of Missions.

In 1844 the committee of bills and overtures

reported to the Assembly that a number of memorials had been put into their hands on the subject of slavery, and recommended that the subject be dismissed from their consideration. Whereupon, a minority of the committee submitted a paper expressive of their want of concurrence in the report; and the Rev. Dr. Spring another paper expressive of his views of the manner in which the subject should be disposed of. And on motion, the whole subject, with all the papers in relation to it, was laid upon the table, by a vote of 115 to 70.

Numerous memorials and petitions were presented to the General Assembly of 1845 on the subject of slavery. They were referred to a special committee. That committee reported, and their report was adopted by a vote of 168 to 13. The following is the report, viz.:

“The memorialists may be divided into three classes, viz.:

“1. Those which represent the system of slavery as it exists in these United States as a great evil, and pray this General Assembly to adopt measures for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves.

“2. Those which ask the Assembly to receive memorials on the subject of slavery, to allow a full discussion of it, and to enjoin upon the members of our Church residing in States whose laws forbid the slaves being taught to read, to seek by all lawful means the repeal of those laws.

“3. Those which represent slavery as a moral evil, a heinous sin in the sight of God, calculated to bring upon the Church the curse of God, and calling

for the exercise of discipline in the case of those who persist in maintaining or justifying the relation of master to slaves.

“The question which is now unhappily agitating and dividing other branches of the Church, and which is pressed upon the attention of the Assembly by one of the three classes of the memorialists just named, is, *whether the holding of slaves is, under all circumstances, a heinous sin, calling for the discipline of the Church.*

“The Church of Christ is a spiritual body, whose jurisdiction extends only to the religious faith and moral conduct of her members. She cannot legislate where Christ has not legislated, nor make terms of membership which he has not made. The question, therefore, which this Assembly is called upon to decide is this: Do the Scriptures teach that the holding of slaves, without regard to circumstances, is a sin, the renunciation of which should be made the condition of membership in the Church of Christ?

“It is impossible to answer this question in the affirmative without contradicting some of the plainest declarations of the word of God. That slavery existed in the days of Christ and his Apostles is an admitted fact. That they did not denounce the relation itself as sinful, as inconsistent with christianity; that slave-holders were admitted to membership in the Churches organized by the Apostles; that whilst they were required to treat their slaves with kindness and as rational, accountable, immortal beings, and, if christians, as breth-

ren in the Lord, they were not commanded to emancipate them; that slaves were required to be "obedient to their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, with singleness of heart as unto Christ," are facts which meet the eye of every reader of the New Testament. This Assembly cannot, therefore, denounce the holding of slaves as necessarily a heinous and scandalous sin, calculated to bring upon the Church the curse of God, without charging the Apostles of Christ with conniving at such sin, introducing into the Church such sinners, and thus bringing upon them the curse of the Almighty.

"In so saying, however, the Assembly are not to be understood as denying that there is evil connected with slavery. Much less do they approve those defective and oppressive laws by which, in some of the States, it is regulated. Nor would they by any means countenance the traffic in slaves for the sake of gain; the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children, for the sake of 'filthy lucre,' or for the convenience of the master; or cruel treatment of slaves in any respect. Every christian and philanthropist certainly should seek, by all peaceable and lawful means, the repeal of unjust and oppressive laws, and the amendment of such as are defective, so as to protect the slaves from cruel treatment by wicked men, and secure to them the right to receive religious instruction.

"Nor is this assembly to be understood as countenancing the idea that masters may regard their servants as *mere property*, and not as human beings,

rational, accountable, immortal. The Scriptures prescribe not only the duties of servants, but also of masters, warning the latter to discharge those duties 'knowing that their Master is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.'

"The Assembly intend simply to say, that since Christ and his inspired Apostles did not make the holding of slaves a bar to communion, we, as a court of Christ, have no authority to do so; since they did not attempt to remove it from the Church by legislation, we have no authority to legislate on the subject. We feel constrained further to say, that however desirable it may be to ameliorate the condition of the slaves in the southern and western States, or to remove slavery from our country, these objects we are fully persuaded can never be secured by ecclesiastical legislation. Much less can they be attained by those indiscriminate denunciations against slave-holders, without regard to their character or circumstances, which have, to so great an extent, characterized the movements of modern abolitionists, which, so far from removing the evils complained of, tend only to perpetuate and aggravate them.

"The Apostles of Christ sought to ameliorate the condition of slaves, not by denouncing and excommunicating their masters, but by teaching both masters and slaves the glorious doctrines of the gospel, and enjoining upon each the discharge of their relative duties. Thus can the Church of Christ, as such, now improve the condition of the slaves in our country.

“As to the extent of the evils involved in slavery, and the best methods of removing them, various opinions prevail, and neither the Scriptures nor our constitution authorize this body to prescribe any particular course to be pursued by the churches under our care. The Assembly cannot but rejoice, however, to learn that the ministers and churches in the slave-holding States are awakening to a deeper sense of their obligation to extend to the slave population generally the means of grace, and many slave-holders not professedly religious, favor this object. We earnestly exhort them to abound more and more in this good work. We exhort every believing master to remember that his Master is also in heaven, and in view of all the circumstances in which he is placed, to act in the spirit of the golden rule: ‘Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even the same to them.’

“In view of the above stated principles and facts,

“*Resolved*, 1st, That the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was originally organized, and has since continued to be the bond of union in the Church, upon the conceded principle that the existence of domestic slavery, under the circumstances in which it is found in the Southern portion of the country, is no bar to christian communion.

“2d, That the petitions that ask the Assembly to make *the holding of slaves in itself* a matter of discipline, do virtually require this judicatory to dissolve itself, and abandon the organization under

which, by the Divine blessings, it has so long prospered. The tendency is evidently to separate the northern from the southern portion of the Church, a result which every good citizen must deplore as tending to the dissolution of the union of our beloved country, and which every enlightened christian will oppose as bringing about a ruinous and unnecessary schism between brethren who maintain a common faith."

By many the above action was regarded as an abandonment of the position taken by the Assembly in 1818 on this subject. Hence,

In 1846 a number of petitions from individuals, memorials from Presbyteries, and a resolution from the Synod of Cincinnati, were presented to the Assembly. These urged the Assembly "to utter additional testimony on the subject of slavery, or at least to re-affirm or explain its former testimony." They were referred to a committee. This committee made the following report, which was adopted, viz.:

"Our Church has, from time to time, during a period of nearly sixty years, expressed its views on the subject of slavery. During all this period it has held and uttered *substantially* the same sentiments. Believing that this *uniform* testimony is true and capable of vindication from the word of God, the Assembly is, at the same time, clearly of the opinion that it has already deliberately and solemnly spoken on this subject with sufficient fulness and clearness. Therefore,

"*Resolved*, That no further action upon this subject is, at present, needed."

At a subsequent session of the same Assembly the following resolution was presented and adopted, viz.:

“Resolved, That in the judgment of this house the action of the General Assembly of 1845 was not intended to deny or rescind the testimony often uttered by the General Assemblies previous to that date.”

In 1847 the Assembly heard a sermon preached according to appointment on the religious instruction of the colored population, by C. C. Jones, D. D.; whereupon it was

“Resolved, 1st, That this Assembly has heard with satisfaction the sermon preached by the Rev. C. C. Jones, D. D., of Georgia, according to their appointment, on the subject of the religious instruction of the colored population.

“Resolved, 2d, That the Assembly regard this subject as one of very great interest and importance, and recognize the goodness of God in opening this field to our ministers and missionaries to so large an extent, and with such cordial approbation from the community.

“Resolved, 3d, That the Board of Missions be directed, if it appears to them advisable, to appoint a secretary or general agent from and for the south and south-west, who shall superintend the collection of funds and the location of missionaries, and attend to the other duties of this department, in co-operation with the Presbyteries and churches in that section of the country.”

The subject of slavery was brought before the

General Assembly of 1848, by a memorial complaining that the testimony in regard to it is not sufficiently definite, and praying that whatever testimony has been borne against it might be published by the Board of Publication, under the order of the Assembly, with such additions and explanations as may render it more effective. The committee to whom this memorial was referred, recommended the following resolution, which was adopted, viz.:

“Resolved, That no additional publicity in regard to the action of this Assembly on the subject of Slavery is necessary.”

The following resolutions commendatory of the Colonization Society were also adopted by the same Assembly:

“Resolved, 1st, That the enterprise of the Colonization Society, so successfully prosecuted amid so much obloquy, opposition, and misunderstanding, has our highest confidence, as wise, peaceful, humane, and philanthropic.

“Resolved, 2d, That as it has been in past years repeatedly commended to the patronage of the churches in our connection, as præeminently combining the noblest benefits to Africa and America, to the emigrant colonists, and to the heathen tribes around them, we would again offer it to their patronage, and most earnestly recommend to all pastors and churches an annual collection for its support, to be made early in July.

“Resolved, 3d, That we have heard with the highest pleasure of the complete destruction of the

slave factories near Liberia, and most earnestly hope for the day when a traffic so odious and cruel shall be swept from the ocean.”

Resolutions were also introduced, but indefinitely postponed, declaring it to be the duty of masters to have servants, born in their house, baptized, and enjoining the Presbyteries to demand an annual report from the church Sessions of their fidelity in the premises, and to report to the Assembly from year to year. It will, however, appear in a subsequent part of this volume, that the General Assembly of 1816, adopted a resolution affirming the general sentiment of these resolutions in reference to the baptism of slave children.

In 1849, again, numerous memorials were presented asking the Assembly to declare slavery to be a sin, to enjoin such discipline as would remove it from the Church, to appoint a committee to collect statistics and report a plan of abolition to the next Assembly. In answer to these memorials the committee to whom they were referred offered the following resolutions, which were adopted, viz.:

“*Resolved*, 1st, That the principles of the Presbyterian Church on the subject of slavery, are already set forth in repeated declarations, so full and so explicit as to need no further exposition.

“*Resolved*, 2d, That in view of the civil and domestic nature of this institution, and the competency of secular legislatures alone to remove it, and in view of the earnest inquiry and deep agitation on the subject, which we now observe in one or more commonwealths of our country where slavery

exists, it be considered peculiarly improper and inexpedient for this General Assembly to attempt or propose measures in the work of emancipation.

“Resolved, 3d, That all necessary and proper provisions is already made for the just exercise of discipline upon those who neglect or violate the mutual duties of masters and servants, and the General Assembly is always ready to enforce these provisions, where the unfaithfulness of any inferior court is made manifest by record, or appeal, or complaint.

“Resolved, 4th, We rejoice to believe that the action of former Assemblies, so far from aiding or allowing the iniquitous oppression of man by his fellow man, has been steadily promoting amelioration in the condition of slaves, by winning the confidence of masters in our freedom from fanaticism, and by stimulating the slave-holder and his pastor alike to labor in the religious instruction of the blacks.

“Resolved, 5th, That it be enjoined upon the Presbyteries situated in slave-holding States to continue and increase their exertions for the religious instruction of slaves, and to report distinctly in their annual narratives to the General Assembly the state of religion among the colored population.”

An overture from the Presbytery of Beaver, was presented in 1850, asking the General Assembly to declare the system of slavery a great moral evil, and to recommend to all the members of our churches to employ such measures as will remove this evil from our Church and from our land. Also,

a memorial from the church of Rocky Spring of the Presbytery of Chilicothe, supplicating the Assembly to re-affirm the action of the Assembly of 1818, and to enjoin upon all our church courts such action as shall speedily rid our Zion of slaveholding. The committee to whom these were referred recommended the adoption of the following resolution upon this subject:

“*Resolved*, That the previous and repeated declarations of the General Assembly upon the subject of American slavery, are such as to render any action upon the above overture and memorial unnecessary.”

This report was ultimately laid upon the table.

The above is a transcript of all that the General Assembly has said upon the subject of slavery.

CHAPTER II.

TESTIMONY OF THE SYNODS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

The testimony here presented has been borne mainly, as will be observed, by those Synods situated in non-slave-holding portions of the country. The action of southern Synods appears in the form of plans for the instruction and elevation of the slaves, and consequently comes more appropriately under another topic presented in this volume. The action of about two-thirds of the Synods belonging to the Church is given. To have given the action of all would have swelled unprofitably the volume. In a few cases the testimony has been abridged, but care has been taken to give it fairly, and in its full force.

The Synods of New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Memphis have not acted upon this subject, being fully satisfied to acquiesce in the testimony borne by the General Assembly.

The Synod of Buffalo have² simply affirmed the action of the General Assembly, thus making it their own testimony upon the subject. have

This subject has been frequently before the Synod of Pittsburgh. In 1839 an overture was presented from the Presbytery of Beaver. It was referred to a committee which reported "that they recommend this body to adopt, as expressive of

their views with reference to this great evil (of slavery) as it exists in our land, the minute of the General Assembly of 1818 on the subject, except so much of it as is found in the Digest on page 345, recommending the Colonization Society." The report was adopted. In a subsequent resolution the Synod declare that their reason for the exception in relation to the Colonization Society, was not any want of confidence in that Society, a great majority of the Synod being in favor of it, but deference to the feelings of brethren, and to avoid protracted debate.

In 1841, the subject being again before Synod, they refer to the act of 1839 and say:

"The Synod have already, (in 1839), in accordance with the resolutions of the Assembly of 1818, borne their strongest testimony against slavery, accompanied with appropriate counsels and directions, as to the duty of christians. They have declared 'that the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another is a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature—is utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves—and is totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ.'"

Again, in 1845, in reply to a memorial from the Presbytery of Beaver, the following resolution was adopted, viz:

"*Resolved*, That this Synod, in the spirit of affectionate regard for these brethren, dismiss the whole subject, with the assurance to them that we

abide by our own action of 1841, affirming the principles of the Assembly's act of 1818, as the unaltered sentiments of this body on the subject of slavery."

In 1844 the Synod of Wheeling passed the following resolution, viz.:

"Resolved, That inasmuch as it was originally recommended by the Presbytery of Georgia, and since by many sister Presbyteries, to the General Assembly's Board of Domestic Missions to send missionaries to labor among the colored population of the South, we heartily approve and recommend to the Board this important field of labor."

In 1845 numerous memorials were presented to the Synod asking them to seek a repeal of the action of the Assembly of the same year. To these the following answer was given:

"While the committee would prefer that this vexed question should be assigned to a special committee, yet as we are required to present the subject to Synod in some form, we recommend the adoption of the following resolution, which we hope will be adopted by the exercise of a spirit of conciliation among brethren, all of whom desire the removal of a great evil existing in our Church and country, and differing little in sentiment except as to the mode of accomplishing that object.

"Resolved, That inasmuch as there is considerable difference of opinion as to the meaning of the action of the last General Assembly on slavery, it being alledged that such action is founded on a more contracted view of the slavery question than

the action of any previous Assembly, presenting the subject in a particular aspect, instead of meeting it fully in its general bearing; yet as that body is accessible to all who approach it in a proper manner, and competent to explain its own action, Synod, therefore, deem it inexpedient to comply with the request of the memorialists in asking the Assembly to repeal its doings, or to make slave-holding a bar to christian communion. And at the same time, Synod take this opportunity of cheerfully expressing their approbation of the sentiments presented by the Assembly of 1818 on this subject."

At a meeting of the Synod of Ohio, in 1835, the following overture was presented, discussed and acted upon, viz.:

"Is it not the duty of the Synod to express their opinion, and to advise the churches respecting the action and excitement of the present times on the subject of slavery, and the various evils which have grown out of the *manner* in which this subject has been managed."

To this overture the following answer was given:

"*Resolved*, 1st, That this Synod cordially approve that provision of the Constitution of the State in which we live which declares that involuntary servitude, unless for the punishment of crime, shall never be permitted; and they cannot but regard slavery as, in every respect, an evil which all men should disapprove, and which should be removed as speedily as may be practicable in a prudent and lawful manner.

"*Resolved*, 2d, That while it is a solemn duty

not to assail, but to respect, the legal and constitutional rights of the inhabitants of those States whose regulations in regard to slavery are different from ours, it is a good work to elevate the character and ameliorate the condition of the whole African race in a safe and reasonable manner.

“*Resolved*, 3d, That it is inconsistent with the wisdom that is from above to excite and inflame the public mind on the subject of slavery, by proposing impracticable or unsafe measures, by circulating publications and disseminating opinions which are inconsistent with the welfare and safety of our fellow citizens.”

In 1837 the subject was brought before the Synod thus:

“The Synod of Ohio, at its present meeting, is respectfully requested to answer the following question: Can any one hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, who claims and exercises a property right in his fellow man, so that he may, at his pleasure, not only sell and buy his labor, but also his person, as he would sell and buy personal property?”

To this question the following answer was given:

“The Synod of Ohio very cordially unite in bearing testimony against slavery as practiced in the United States, believing it to be a great sin against God; but think that the discussion of this subject at this time by the Synod, is uncalled for and unprofitable to our churches and to the world.”

The following resolutions, adopted by the Synod

of Cincinnati in the year 1844, contain their testimony on this subject:

“1. *Resolved*, That the system of slavery as it exists in several States of this Union, including those unequal and unjust laws which authorize the master to separate families and make merchandise of his slaves for gain, is manifestly contrary to the principles of the gospel, and therefore sinful.

“2. *Resolved*, That while we hold and declare this sentiment, nevertheless it is our view, that there are individuals in our Church who stand in the relation of masters to slaves, who are for a time under such peculiar circumstances that they cannot be justly charged with sin merely because of this relation.”

The testimony of the Synod of northern Indiana on the subject of slavery, is contained in a fraternal letter which they addressed in 1844 to the ministers and members of the churches belonging to the Synods situated in the slave-holding States. The following extract will fully exhibit their views:

“We cannot, in so brief a space as we have allowed ourselves, discuss the evils of slavery at large; but we are concerned to place before you old facts again with the hope that, coming from your own brethren, they will quicken your zeal if it need rousing. The facts that we wish to present are such as follow: That a slave must be ignorant. No exception can alter the general statement that safety requires that slaves should be ignorant. They are, therefore, not taught to read—their

minds are not developed by instruction—they are acted upon by motives proper only to animals, and generally sink to or below the range of animals. Whatever things they are taught are for the purposes of gain—to make them better *slaves*, and not better *men*. With this omission is coupled another and a worse one—the neglect of their moral culture. Their souls are left as destitute of light as their minds, and thus at once they are forbidden to be men on earth or saints in heaven. If some few are slenderly taught, the effect of the system is unquestionably to place the slave in circumstances where vice and degradation will be inevitable and certain. Marriage is but a name. The ties of parental and filial love are subject to violation at any time, without a single guard, except that which may exist in the breast of the master. Promiscuous concubinage becomes general. Chastity ceases to be a virtue. Why should it be recognized when the slaves are tempted to free indulgence by the example of the master and his sons among them? We are pained to speak of these things, nor would we were there not uncontradicted evidence in every slave State that the slave population is in a most degraded state of morals. When every natural right is violated in respect to the slave, can we expect that he will grope out, in his darkness, the laws of honesty or veracity? Can a slave be a slave long without becoming a thief and a liar? Where there is no motive to labor such as God has made as proper to man—no hope of reward—no wages—no acquisition of property—

no hope of liberty—can a slave be other than indolent? And the lowest instincts of animal man will teach him, by trick and cunning, to secure indolence as the only luxury of his condition.

“That many christian masters strive to avert these evils from their slaves does not alter the general effect; and their example, by presenting the fairest aspect of slavery, quiets the conscience of the holder; and it may be said without exaggeration, that the better a limited portion of the slaves are made, the worse it is for the whole, since the good of the few becomes a palliation for the evil of the many. The world has never known an instance—we do not believe it possible that there should be an instance—of a race subjected to absolute servitude without making them dishonest, mean-spirited, trickish, lying, and unchaste. And in respect to African slaves, we perceive them to be unenlightened in all those things which are becoming to man on earth, and in respect to their souls, as dark as that wretched world to which they are hastening.

“A system which violates the natural rights of man, affords not one incitement to good, which appeals only to the lowest appetites, which leaves the mind dark from policy, and the soul darker yet from neglect, which influences every evil passion without encouraging one virtuous feeling; which begins by defrauding men of every right, and ends by reducing them so low that they no longer care for such loss; takes away every such excitement and pleasure as is common to humanity,

and ends by making the slave entirely happy as a beast, surely such a system is abhorrent to every expressed notion of right among men, to every sentiment of freedom in our bosom, and stands in most deadly opposition to the word of God."

Holding these views, of course the Synod urge emancipation. They regard emancipation as the most efficient, and an indispensable preparation for freedom. They however acquiesce in the action of the General Assembly of 1845.

The Synod of Kentucky acted on the subject of slavery as early as the year 1809. The Session of Concord Church had suspended an individual for exposing to sale at public auction a negro boy. The case was carried to the Presbytery of West Lexington, and the Presbytery reversed the decision of the Session. It was then appealed to Synod, and the Synod "determined that the judgment of Presbytery ought to be, and it is hereby reversed, and the decision of the Session of Concord Church confirmed." This action was afterward re-considered, and the case remanded to the Session for re-investigation and final decision.

At the same time, the Synod directed the Presbyteries to take such order as to them might seem most prudent, to secure the religious instruction of the slaves, and also a humane and christian treatment of them. The same sentiment has been frequently expressed by the Synod.

In 1834 the abstract subject was brought before Synod, and a paper was adopted declaring "slavery repugnant to the principles of our holy reli-

gion;" that "its continuance any longer than is necessary for its safe and beneficial termination, is sinful." And the Presbyteries and Church Sessions were directed to adopt measures for the gradual emancipation of slaves, especially those to be hereafter born.

A committee appointed by the Synod for the purpose, published in 1835 an address describing in glowing language the horrors of the slave system, and proposing a plan for gradual emancipation. This report was not acted upon by the Synod, although known to be expressive of the views of nearly all its members. The reason of its not being presented was the fanatical excitement which arose about this period at the north, rendering it impolitic to agitate the subject in the region occupied by the Synod. This address is too long to be inserted here entire. The following synopsis will exhibit its doctrines and plan of emancipation. It may be proper to add that the recent political history of Kentucky abundantly proves that the sentiments of the address are those entertained now by almost every member of that Synod. The address declares:

"We all admit that the system of slavery which exists among us is not right. The system as it exists among us, and is constituted by our laws, *consists of three distinct parts—a deprivation of the right of property, a deprivation of personal liberty, and a deprivation of personal security.*

"1. *A part of our system of slavery consists in depriving human beings of the right to acquire*

and hold property. Every man has from God a right to the proceeds of his own labor. All recognize this right. The Scriptures teach and strongly guard it. Slavery deprives men of it.

“2. *The deprivation of personal liberty forms another part of our system of slavery.* ‘All men are created equal.’ They have an inalienable right to liberty. The slave has no right to his wife or children. He has no right to himself. His flesh is bought and sold. He is subject to the will of an absolute master. The rights of conscience are ever destroyed. The master may prevent his slaves from worshiping God according to the dictates of their conscience.

“3. *The deprivation of personal security is the remaining constituent of our system of slavery.* The master may maltreat in any form, and to any extent short of producing speedy death. Any other white man may abuse, and even murder the slave in the presence of any number of other slaves. Their testimony cannot convict him.

“There are certain *effects* springing naturally and necessarily out of such a system, which must also be considered.

“1. Its most striking effect is, *to deprave and degrade its subjects by removing from them the strongest natural checks to human corruption.* There are certain principles of human nature by which God works to save the moral world from ruin. In the slave these principles are eradicated. He is degraded to a mere creature of appetite and passion. These are the feelings by which he is

governed. The salt which preserves human nature is extracted, and it is left a putrifying mass.

"2. It dooms thousands of human beings to hopeless ignorance. The slave has no motive to acquire knowledge. The master will not undergo the expense of his education. The law positively forbids it. Nor can this state of things become better unless it is determined that slavery shall cease. Slavery cannot be perpetuated if education be generally or universally given the slaves.

"3. It deprives its subjects, in a great measure, of the privileges of the gospel. Their inability to read prevents their access to the Scriptures. The Bible is to them a sealed book. There is no adequate provision made for their attendance upon the public means of grace. Nor are they prepared to profit from instructions designed for their masters. They listen when in the sanctuary to prophesyings in an unknown tongue. Comparatively few of them are taught to bow with their masters around the domestic altar. Family ordinances of religion are almost unknown in the domestic circles of the blacks.

"4. This system licenses and produces great cruelty. The whip is placed in the hands of the master, and he may use it at his pleasure only avoiding the destruction of life. Slaves often suffer all that can be inflicted by wanton caprice, by grasping avarice, by brutal lust, by malignant spite, and by insane anger. Their happiness is the sport of every whim, and the prey of every passion that may enter the master's bosom. Their bodies are

lacerated with the lash. Their dignity is habitually insulted. Their tenderest affections are wantonly crushed. Dearest friends are torn asunder. Brothers and sisters, parents and children, see each other no more. There is not a neighborhood where these heart-rending scenes are not displayed. There is not a village or a road that does not behold the sad procession of manacled outcasts, whose chains and mournful countenances tell that they are exiled by force from all they hold dear.

“5. *It produces general licentiousness among the slaves.* Marriage as a civil ordinance they cannot enjoy. Their marriages are mere contracts voidable at their master's pleasure or their own. And never, in any civilized county, has respect for these restraints of matrimony been more nearly obliterated than it has been among our blacks. This system of universal concubinage produces revolting licentiousness.

“6. *This system demoralizes the whites as well as the blacks.* The masters are clothed with despotic power. To depraved humanity this is exceedingly dangerous. Indolence is thus fostered. And hard-heartedness, selfishness, arrogance and tyranny are, in most men, rapidly developed and fearfully exhibited.

“7. *This system draws down upon us the vengeance of heaven.* ‘If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn to death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not

know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works?' 'The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. * * * Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them: I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord.' Such is the system, such are some of its effects.

"But some affirm that God's word sanctions slavery. It is said that God expressly permitted his people to enslave the Canaanites. True, he thus punished them. It is his prerogative to punish men for their guilt in one form or another, as shall seem good to him. But man may not arrogate the prerogative of the Almighty. If the Bible sanctioned slavery, it must be the Greek and Roman slavery which prevailed in the Apostle's days. That was a system far more cruel than the American. Is it not an insult to God to affirm that he approved such a system? But the Apostles gave directions for the mutual conduct of masters and servants. True, but the relation of master and servant will always exist, though slavery should cease. And the directions apply to all forms of this relation; and do not prove the correctness of slavery any more than the injunction to be 'subject to the powers that be,' proves the divine right of kings. But it is said, 'the New Testament does not condemn slave-holding in express terms.' It does in the most direct and positive manner. The Greek

language had not a term answering to the word *slave*. Hence the Apostles enumerated all the distinctive features of slavery, and declared each and all of them sinful. They also enjoined those virtues the practice of which would destroy slavery. The precepts against fraud, oppression, pride and cruelty, all cut through the heart of the slave system. And the command, 'love thy neighbor as thyself,' would wholly remove it from the earth. Slavery is forbidden by the Scriptures precisely as gladiatorial shows, in which men were hired to butcher each other, and the selling of children by their parents, often practiced formerly, are forbidden; that is, by denouncing all the crimes which these acts involve.

"From these views it appears manifestly the duty of every individual to aid vigorously and efficiently in the abolition of slavery. It is not enough to affirm, 'I have done all I can for the comfort and well-being of my own slaves.' This will not protect their posterity, nor secure the good of others. This does not fulfil the injunction, 'what things soever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them.'

"It is often urged that *the slaves are better off than the free negroes*. But has God so created a whole race that it is better for them to remain in perpetual bondage? None believe it. Nor should it be plead as a justification of slavery that emancipation will promote a mixture of the two races. But if each individual liberate and colonize his slaves, he will fully meet his responsibility and

avoid the criminality of promoting this mixture. It is, therefore, the duty of every christian to use vigorous and immediate measures for the destruction of this whole system, and for the removal of its unhappy effects.

“But what plan can be adopted for effecting this work? The most simple is that of abolition, or immediate and complete emancipation. But those who conceive that immediate emancipation is, in all cases, a duty, do not reflect upon the circumstances in which we are placed. No laws are provided for the peculiar condition of the emancipated blacks. They would be exposed to great dangers and evils. But,

“The plan which we propose is, for the master to retain, during a limited period, and with regard to the real welfare of the slave, that authority which he before had in perpetuity, and solely for his own interest. Let the full liberty of the slave be secured against all contingencies by a recorded deed of emancipation, to take effect at a specified time. In the meanwhile, let the servant be treated with kindness—let all those things which degrade him be removed—let him enjoy means of instruction—let his moral and religious improvement be sought—let his prospects be presented before him, to stimulate him to acquire those habits of foresight, economy, industry, activity, skill, and integrity which will fit him for using well the liberty he is soon to enjoy.

“To the objection that the man who adopts this gradual scheme encourages others in slave-holding,

it is replied, that his example cannot be appealed to for such a purpose. He has, by his deed of emancipation, recorded his detestation of the system. It should also be seriously considered whether, by a hasty emancipation of some, the chains may not be more firmly riveted upon others. When set at liberty without being prepared, their improper conduct will produce a strong prejudice against both free blacks and the cause of emancipation. In view of this plan—

“1. We would recommend that all slaves now under twenty years of age, and all those yet to be born in our possession, be emancipated as they severally reach their twenty-fifth year.

“2. We recommend that deeds of emancipation be now drawn up, and recorded in our respective county courts, specifying the slaves we are about to emancipate, and the age at which each is to become free.

“3. We recommend that our slaves be instructed in the common elementary branches of education.

“4. We recommend that strenuous and persevering efforts be made to induce them to attend regularly upon the ordinary services of religion, both domestic and public.

“5. We recommend that great pains be taken to teach them the holy Scriptures; and that to effect this, the instrumentality of Sabbath schools, wherever they can be enjoyed, be united with that of domestic instruction.

“Many churches have a sufficient number of pious masters to enable them to hire a teacher for

the young whom they intend to emancipate. The younger members of many families can engage in giving them instruction. Sabbath schools for them should be organized in nearly all our congregations.

“There are but three courses before you—immediate or gradual emancipation, or a perpetuation of the system. The first you will not probably adopt. If you refuse to pursue the second, there is no alternative but to lend your influence to perpetuate a system which God abhors—which exhibits power without responsibility, toil without recompense, life without liberty, law without justice, wrongs without redress, infamy without crime, punishment without guilt, and families without marriage. Secular legislatures will not remove the evil; the work must begin at the house of God.

“We must soon all appear at God’s bar. Are you prepared to say, ‘As I have done unto these, so let it be done unto me; as I have showed mercy, so let me receive mercy at the hand of my judge.’”

Such is a brief and faithful summary of this address, although not always given in its own language. In the clearest and most forcible manner are the evils both of the nature and practical workings of the system pointed out. And most earnestly is their removal plead for.

The following letter, addressed by the Synod of Virginia to one of its Presbyteries, although written in 1800, is still expressive of the sentiments of the members on the subject of slavery:

“REV. AND DEAR BRETHREN—A letter from

your committee enclosing a memorial from the united congregations of Caneridge and Concord, is now before us; and much do we lament the unhappy occasion of that address. That so many thousands of our fellow creatures should, in this land of liberty and assylum for the oppressed, be held in chains, is a reflection to us painfully afflictive. And most earnestly do we wish that all the members of our communion would pay a proper attention to the recommendation of the late Synod of New York and Philadelphia upon this subject. We consider it the indispensable duty of all who hold slaves to prepare, by a suitable education, the young among them for a state of freedom, and to liberate them as soon as they shall appear to be duly qualified for that high privilege; and such as neglect a duty so evidently and so powerfully enforced by the common principles of justice, as well as by the dictates of humanity, and the benign genius of our holy religion, ought, in our opinion, to be seriously dealt with and admonished on that account. But to refuse to hold christian communion with any who may differ from us in sentiment and practice in this instance, would, we conceive, in the present conjuncture at least, be a very unwarrantable procedure; a direct infraction of the decision of the General Assembly of our Church, and a manifest departure from the practice of the Apostles and the primitive Church. Nor is this all. Such a measure would, it appears to us, be more likely to confirm such as err in this instance in their errors than to relieve them.

“There seems to be an evident want of precision in the reasoning of the brethren who presented the memorial referred to us. They consider slavery to be a moral evil, and consequently a sufficient ground of exclusion from the communion of the Church. Nay, they represent it as a known sin, and seem evidently to intimate that the members of the Church who live in the practice of it, know it to be a sin. This statement appears to be not only incorrect, but inconsistent with the plan of emancipation submitted for your consideration. If the holding of any of our fellow creatures in a state of servitude be absolutely and in every circumstance a moral evil, or a sin, a total emancipation ought immediately to take place. A measure which would, there is reason to apprehend, be attended with many and great evils, and that moral, as well as political; and which their good sense and moderation did not permit them to recommend.

“That it was wrong in the first instance to reduce so many of the helpless Africans to their present state of thralldom will be readily admitted, and that it is a duty to adopt proper measures for their emancipation, will, it is presumed, be universally conceded. But with respect to the measures best calculated to accomplish that important purpose, and the time necessary to give them full effect, different sentiments may be entertained by the true disciples of the Great Friend of man.

And in this instance of doubtful disputation mutual forbearance and charity ought to be exercised toward those who differ in opinion from one an-

other. If any retain their slaves in a state of bondage, at the same time that they consider it their duty to emancipate them immediately, they are certainly highly censurable, and deserve to be excluded from the communion of the Church. This is, however, a charge which ought not to be advanced without sufficient evidence to support it; and the advocates for emancipation ought to beware lest by too much precipitation they should obstruct the good work in which they are engaged. This caution seems to be peculiarly necessary at the present time, when there is so much reason to apprehend dangerous insurrections from the black people in some of our States, and when a dangerous plot for the purpose has recently been discovered in Virginia. And, may that Almighty Being who hath made of one blood all the nations upon earth, dispose the hearts of all the members of our Church to do justly, and love mercy, at the same time that they profess to walk humbly with their God.

“By order of Synod.”

Again, in 1835, when the subject of abolition was brought before Synod, the following action was taken, viz.:

“The resolutions from the Winchester Presbytery on the subject of abolition were read. These, together with a paper presented by Prof. Taylor on the general subject of slavery, were committed to a committee.

“The committee on the resolutions from Presby-

teries of Winchester and East Hanover, made their report, which was adopted, and is as follows:

“The committee to whom were referred the resolutions of the Presbyteries of Winchester and East Hanover, have, according to order, had the same under consideration, and respectfully report, that in their judgment, the following resolutions are necessary and proper to be adopted by the Synod at the present time :

“Whereas, the publications and proceedings of certain organized associations, commonly called Anti-slavery or Abolition Societies, which have lately arisen in some parts of our land, have greatly disturbed, and are still greatly disturbing, the peace of the Church and of the country; and the Synod of Virginia deem it a solemn duty which they owe to themselves and to the community to declare their sentiments upon the subject; therefore,

“1. *Resolved unanimously*, That we consider the dogma so fiercely promulgated by the said associations, that slavery as it exists in our slave-holding States is necessarily sinful and ought to be immediately abolished, and the conclusions which naturally flow from that dogma as directly and palpably contrary to the plainest principles of common sense and common humanity, and to the clearest authority of the word of God.

“2. *Resolved unanimously*, That in the deliberate judgment of this Synod it is the duty of all ministers of the gospel to follow the example of our Lord and Saviour and of his Apostles in similar circumstances, in abstaining from all interfer-

ence with the state of slavery as established among us by the laws of our commonwealth, and confining themselves strictly to their proper province of inculcating upon masters and slaves the duties enjoined upon them respectively in the sacred Scriptures, which must tend immediately to promote the welfare of both, and ultimately to restore the whole world to that state of holy happiness which is the earnest desire of every christian heart.”

It will be apparent to the attentive reader of the foregoing pages, that amid some variety of sentiment and manner of speaking, there is an essential co-incidence of views among the Synods. These views also accord in the main with those expressed by the General Assembly. They all condemn the evils connected with or growing out of the system of slavery. They all abhor the system. And they all acquiesce in the sentiment that a slave-holder may, notwithstanding, be a true child of God, and properly a member of the visible Church. Such a general concurrence of views, among men possessed of as much intelligence and love of truth and purity as those composing these bodies, is a powerful presumption of their correctness.

CHAPTER III.

THE POSITION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE
SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

It may be proper here to refer to a preliminary question. Is the testimony of the General Assembly consistent with itself? This has been answered in the negative. Many affirm that the Assembly have more recently, not only departed from, but contradicted their former testimony. Now that it professes to be consistent may be regarded as a presumption that it is so. It is proper to take for granted that the Assembly speak honestly and truly until some decisive evidence to the contrary is presented. In 1846 the Assembly resolved, "That the act of 1845 was not intended to deny or rescind the testimony often borne by the General Assembly previous to that date." This must be regarded as tantamount to a re-affirmation of all the testimony which had previously been uttered. Whatever contrariety, therefore, others may suppose to exist between the act of 1845 and antecedent acts, the design of the Assembly was to testify in precise accordance with the sentiments before expressed. Candor, then, requires that such a construction be put upon the act of 1845 as will make it accord with former acts on that subject, if it be practicable.

But a careful examination of all the testimony

borne, together with the circumstances under which the several acts were passed, will clearly show that the different parts essentially co-incide. In the act of 1787, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia proceed upon the assumption that slavery is a great evil, and yet that all who hold slaves are not necessarily so guilty as to exclude them from the Church; and recommend christian masters to educate their slaves and prepare them for freedom, and to labor for the final abolition of slavery. This was reiterated by the General Assembly in 1793. In 1795 the Assembly were called upon to answer this question:

“Should a conscientious person, viewing slavery as a moral evil highly offensive to God and injurious to the interests of the gospel, living among those who practice it, hold christian communion with them?”

This question they answered in the affirmative, and exhorted those persons to live with their brethren differing from them in opinion, in charity and peace. At the same time they expressed regret in reference to the existence of slavery, condemned the traffic in slaves, and all undue severity towards them, and enjoined upon the Presbyteries and Sessions to labor to prevent such shameful conduct. Here, while the system is condemned and some of its evils pointed out as subjects of Church discipline, the mere fact of sustaining the relation of master is declared no bar to christian communion. This testimony was reiterated in 1815.

In 1818 the subject was brought before the

Assembly by a resolution offered in reference to the sale of a slave who was a professor of religion. A committee was appointed and directed to prepare a report to be adopted by the General Assembly, expressing their opinion in general on the subject of slavery. It was the system, the general subject then, which they considered. And they contemplated it especially in the aspect of the numerous and fearful evils connected with or growing out of it. The system, with its evils, they most justly and most vividly portrayed, and most unequivocally condemned. They gave suitable directions for the conduct of all christians who are connected with slavery. But when they said, "these evils connect themselves with its very existence," they manifestly meant the system, and not every individual case of slave-holding. They were testifying in reference to the system in general. They could not have meant to charge every individual slaveholder with the perpetration of such evils, else they must have directed that every such person be excluded from the Church. No church on earth could knowingly and purposely retain those within its pale who are guilty of the wrongs they describe as involved in slavery, and yet claim to be a church of Christ, or be recognized as such by others. But that they did not mean to condemn or unchurch every slave-holder, is clear from their own language. "And we at the same time exhort others to forbear harsh censures and uncharitable reflections on their brethren who unhappily live among slaves whom they cannot immediately set

free.” Whilst, then, they strongly condemned the system and all the evils connected with it, they evidently did not affirm that the holding of slaves is itself to be taken as decisive evidence of such guilt as must exclude from christian communion. They manifestly proceed upon the assumption of the opposite doctrine.

In 1845 the question presented before the Assembly was not concerning the system of slavery in general, but, “whether the holding of slaves is, under all circumstances, a heinous sin, calling for the discipline of the Church?” To the settlement of this question the attention of the Assembly was mainly confined. And after condemning almost every essentially evil feature of the system, they answer the question in the negative. When, in doing this, they affirm that “domestic slavery, under the circumstances in which it is found in the southern portion of this country, is no bar to christian communion,” they clearly mean, not the system of slavery as it exists, but the mere holding of slaves. This will be plain from a moment’s consideration. There are but three interpretations of their language which can be given. The first of these is, that it signifies the whole slave system as it exists in the south. This, many contend, is the true interpretation. But surely it cannot be. They were acting upon the question whether the mere holding of slaves is an offence that should exclude from the Church. Their reasoning proved that this is not necessarily sinful. If they meant to embrace the whole system in their conclusion, they

were guilty of a palpable and shameful sophism, in discussing and professing to act upon one point, yet actually determining a totally different one. But such sophistry ought not, without the weightiest reasons, to be charged upon a body so large, able, and pious. If this be their meaning, they contradicted all the testimony they had ever borne upon the subject. But themselves have assured us positively since, that such was not their intention. This, therefore cannot be the true interpretation of their language.

A second interpretation which may be given is, that the circumstances under which the members of the Church in the south are placed, justify their practicing slavery according to the system. But this would involve the same sophism referred to above, and would in like manner contradict the preceding testimony of the Assembly, which they assure us they did not design to do. And besides, it would have been utter folly for the Assembly thus gravely to pronounce upon the circumstances of thousands of persons, and predicate so important a decision upon them, when in truth they were totally ignorant of the actual situation of nine-tenths of all these persons. This, therefore, cannot be their true meaning.

The only remaining interpretation that can be given is, that by "domestic slavery" they mean the simple holding of slaves, or slavery divested of the evils they had condemned and connected with the discharge of the duties they had previously enjoined. This agrees with the subject which was

before them, the reasoning they employed, and the language of the conclusion to which their reasoning brought them: "The Assembly cannot, therefore, denounce the *holding of slaves* as necessarily a heinous and scandalous sin." It accords with the language of which follows: "The petitions that ask the Assembly to make the *holding of slaves in itself* a matter of discipline." This interpretation shows a complete harmony between the proposition before them, their reasoning in reference to it, the conclusion at which they arrived, and their final action. It also makes their testimony coincide with that previously borne, and also with the position of nearly all the evangelical churches of this country upon the subject. However unhappy their language, we deem this therefore, plainly their meaning. Their sentiment manifestly is, that *slave-holding*, under the circumstances in which it is practiced by professors of religion living in the southern portion of this country, is not in itself a bar to christian communion.

This sentiment is involved by open declaration or manifest implication, in all the testimony borne by the Assembly from the beginning. The system slavery, with all its evils, has, in like manner been condemned by all the testimony uttered from the first. There is, therefore, clearly an essential consistency and coincidence of parts in all the testimony borne by the Assembly, at different periods from its formation until the present time.

This point satisfactorily settled, we may proceed to enquire what is the precise position which the

General Assembly have, by these acts, assumed? That we may have a short, comprehensive and accurate view of this matter, we have condensed all the testimony of the Assembly into the following concise statements. We think they accurately set forth the position which the chief judicatory of our Church occupies on this important and difficult subject:

1st. The Assembly have never asserted the absolute sinlessness of the relation of master and slave as it exists even among professing christians in the southern portion of this country. They simply declare that the abstract relation is not necessarily sinful.

2d. Then, as the abstract relation is not necessarily sinful, the Assembly hold that the mere fact that any persons in the southern portion of this country sustain that relation, cannot, without regard to circumstances, be pronounced a sin, the renunciation of which should be made a condition of membership in the Church of Christ; or, in other words, that *slave-holding*, "under the circumstances in which it is found in the southern portion of this country," is not in itself "a bar to christian communion."

3d. The system of slavery, or "the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another," which is done under the slave system as it exists at the south, the Assembly declares "a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, utterly inconsistent with the law of God, and totally irreconcilable with the spirit and

principles of the gospel of Christ.” In the strongest and most unequivocal terms they condemn the whole system.

4th. The Assembly also decidedly condemn all the specific evil features of the system. They forbid the members of the Church to regard their slaves as mere property, and not as human beings, rational, accountable, and immortal. They forbid the traffic in slaves for the sake of gain or convenience, the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children, and all cruelty of whatever kind in their treatment.

5th. The Assembly also enjoin upon all the members of the Church who hold slaves to instruct them especially in the great doctrines of christianity; to cultivate in them habits of industry, economy, and management, such as will prepare them for the enjoyment of freedom; and to labor in the most prudent and effective way for the final abolition of slavery as speedily as possible; and to act towards them in the spirit of the golden rule, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them.”

6th. The General Assembly moreover enjoin upon the Sessions and Presbyteries to strive to prevent the perpetration, by any of the members of the Church, of the wrongs authorized by the system; and promptly to visit any disregard of the prohibitions and injunctions stated above with discipline, even to the extent of the suspension of the offender from all the privileges of the Church, “till he re-

pent and make all the reparation in his power to the injured party."

In short, the mere legal relation they hold to be not necessarily sinful; they condemn the system. The wrongs authorized by it they forbid upon the penalty of Church discipline; and they enjoin the duties which men standing in this relation to others owe them. Such we regard as the position taken, the doctrines held, and the prohibitions and injunctions given, by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in reference to that mournful evil, American slavery.

It will be manifest at a glance that this simple statement shows the utter falsehood of the charge shamelessly made, and unweariedly reiterated, that the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Church are pro-slavery. If to condemn in strong terms the whole system, to forbid indulgence by any of the members in the wrongs authorized by it, to enjoin the discharge of all social and moral duties not recognized by it, decidedly to encourage efforts for its final abolition, and to pursue a course designed and adapted, by instructing both master and slaves in the great principles of the gospel, entirely to remove it in the safest manner—if to copy the example of the Apostles in circumstances somewhat similar—is to favor the system of slavery, then, and not otherwise, are the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Church pro-slavery. Besides, the evidence adduced to establish this charge when carefully examined utterly fails. It is alleged that the act of the Assembly of 1845 placed them upon

new and pro-slavery ground. But do not the facts prove the contrary? The question before the Assembly was, "Is *slave-holding* a sin which should exclude its perpetrator from the Church?" The answer as we have seen was, "It is no bar to christian communion." The question was before the Assembly of 1795, "Ought a serious person, opposed to slavery, to hold communion with those who hold slaves and tolerate the practice in others?" And it was answered affirmatively. Are not these two decisions of the Assembly perfectly coincident? In the action of 1818 the same general sentiment is expressed in the following language: "And we *at the same time exhort others to forbear harsh censures and uncharitable reflections on their brethren, who unhappily live among slaves whom they cannot immediately set free*, but who, at the same time are really using their influence, and all their endeavors, to bring them into a state of freedom, as soon as a door for it can be safely opened." Does not this distinctly imply that those who held slaves whom they could not immediately set free were still entitled to membership in the Church? "that slave-holding, under the circumstances in which it exists in the southern portion of this country, is no bar to christian communion?" The doctrine taught in 1845 was not, therefore, either new or pro-slavery.

In support of this charge it is affirmed that the Board of Publication, in issuing Keith on the Prophecies, omitted a section containing anti-slavery sentiment. The statement is untrue. In

issuing the first edition, the section referred to was omitted, without the knowledge or concurrence of the publishing committee. But as soon as this fact became known to the committee, it was promptly restored. No evidence in support of the charge can, therefore, be derived from this source.

In the preparation of the Hymn Book recently adopted in the Presbyterian Church, a single verse of a certain hymn, containing anti-slavery sentiment, was omitted. It is claimed that this omission was made through the influence of pro-slavery feeling. But there is not a particle of evidence that the omission was noticed by the Assembly when the book was adopted and recommended, much less justified on the ground alleged. And a prominent member of the committee by whom the book was prepared declares that the question of slavery had nothing whatever to do with the omission. This testimony, therefore, fails. In reference to the action of the committee, I have received, through a friend, the following from Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, D. D.:

“All the gentlemen named above, [members of the committee,] except my brother (Rev. John Breckinridge) and myself, were from the north, and not one of them, I am convinced, ever had the slightest desire, motive, feeling or principle, that would lead them to favor slavery, much less to use dishonorably a sacred trust to promote indirectly the interests of that unhappy institution. Nor is it possible that they could have done any thing of the sort, as members of that committee, without

my knowing it. My brother and myself, the only southern members of the committee who participated largely in its labors, it is well known, never considered slavery in any other light than as an institution hostile to the rights, the duties, the happiness and the interests of mankind, and, therefore, no two men on earth were less likely to do the act, which, it appears, some are reckless enough to charge us with."

But the evidence most relied on to make out the charge is the removal, by the Assembly of 1816, from the Confession of Faith, of a note under the eighth commandment. The note described the crime of manstealing. The history of this note and another relating to a different subject, removed at the same time, is this: In 1792 the Assembly deemed it expedient that a new edition of the Confession of Faith be issued, and that Scripture texts in support of the articles of the Confession be appended. A committee was appointed to execute this work. In 1793 this committee reported progress and were continued, one new member being appointed to fill a vacancy occasioned by death. In 1794 the committee reported the Scripture proofs which they had prepared. Their report "was in part read, examined and approved as a specimen of the work." But there is no evidence that these notes were read and approved by that Assembly. And the fact that they occurred toward the close of the report, if they were in it at all, which we cannot positively affirm, creates a presumption that they were not. This report was then referred to a

committee consisting of Dr. Ashbel Green, of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and others, with instruction to "compare the proofs now reported with the proofs annexed to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechism and Directory; to revise the whole, prepare it for the press, agree with a printer for its publication, and to superintend the printing and binding of the same." The committee, according to instruction, prepared and published the book with these notes in it. An overture from the Presbytery of Philadelphia, of which Dr. Green was a member, was presented to the Assembly of 1816, relating to these notes. This overture was referred to a committee, who reported, and their report was adopted. Subsequently, however, the act adopting this report was reconsidered, and the overture referred to another committee with Dr. Green as chairman, by whom these notes were originally introduced, or at least finally retained and published in that edition of the Confession; and who penned the act of 1818. This committee reported in favor of omitting the notes from all future editions of the Confession of Faith, and their report was adopted. But there is no evidence that the removal of this note was based upon, or plead for, on account of its anti-slavery sentiment. Indeed the facts clearly show that this was not the case. The overture relating to its omission came from the Presbytery of which Dr. Green, who is known to have held anti-slavery sentiments, was a leading member. He prepared the report by which it was removed. And the Assembly which adopted

this report was composed of eighty-seven members from the north and nineteen from the south. And as if foreseeing that this charge would be brought, the Assembly declare, in reference to this omission, in the very act by which it was consummated, "that in directing it they are influenced by far other motives than any desire to favor slavery, or retard the extinction of that mournful evil, as speedily as may consist with the happiness of all concerned." And the Assembly of the preceding year, (1815,) had borne decided anti-slavery testimony; and subsequently, that of 1818, passed an act still more strongly condemning the system. These are the facts. The slightest regard to them will show the absurdity of attempting to obtain proof in support of this charge from the act of 1816. To secure such testimony it must be presumed without evidence, that this note was before the Assembly of 1794, and received their distinct approval; that the omission was based upon the anti-slavery sentiment of the note; that during the lapse of twenty-two years Dr. Green had become pro-slavery, and returned to anti-slavery views before the close of the two succeeding years; that the General Assembly had, in the space of one year after the testimony borne in 1815, become pro-slavery, and returned again to their former position in 1818; or, that nineteen southern members outvoted eighty-seven northern in 1816; and that the Assembly of that year were hypocrites, and deliberately published to the world a known falsehood. Surely,

if the assumption of all this be not a most bald absurdity, there exists no such thing. These notes were omitted, doubtless, because they were not authoritative, and had no right to a place in the standards of the Church, never having received the sanction of the Presbyteries; and because their retention would have been a dangerous precedent. The charge is, therefore, not sustained by any evidence, but contradicted by every thing the Assembly has said or done upon the subject.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POSITION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ESSENTIALLY ACCORDING TO TRUTH AND RIGHT.

It is not our purpose here to endorse every sentiment uttered by the Assembly, without modification, much less to justify the manner in which the subject of slavery has sometimes been treated by them. Still less are we disposed to regard with favor the ultra views which have been expressed by some Presbyterians, and even judicatories of the Church at the South. If we have correctly stated the position held by the General Assembly of our Church, it is manifest that in many of its points all, at least at the north, can heartily concur. And the history of the Church shows that, the southern portion of it generally, regards that position as according to truth and right. In the condemnation of the whole system of slavery which the Assembly has pronounced, all will cordially agree. Even an overwhelming majority of professors of religion, and a large proportion of those who are not professors, at the south, can heartily subscribe this condemnation. A system which reduces rational, accountable, immortal men to the condition of chattels; which chains, not only the body in hopeless bondage, but the soul under the darkness of an almost heathenish ignorance, shutting out, under severe penalties, the light of science and the gospel;

which sweeps away at once all motive to integrity and virtue; which subjects a whole race of men to the irresponsible power of another race, upon the neck of whose lusts the rein is thrown loose; which gives one man the authority to oppress and abuse another to any degree almost, short of taking away life; which authorizes one to trample upon the interests, temporal and eternal of another, and to disregard all his feelings; which gives him power to tear the wife from the bosom of the loving husband, or the smiling innocent from the embrace of an affectionate mother; in a word, which gives license to treat men, women, and children in many respects as irrational brutes—can such a system be any other than “utterly inconsistent with the law of God, totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ,” utterly and outrageously wrong? Surely it deserves the severest reprobation of all who love what is right, and pure, and good. Such essentially is the system of slavery which prevails in this fairest and most highly blest American land. All good men not entirely blinded by custom or interest, or prejudice, join the Assembly in its condemnation.

Nor will any doubt the correctness of the condemnation which the General Assembly have passed upon the specific evils that grow out of the operation of the system. The regarding of men as chattels, the keeping of them in ignorance, the practice of cruelty towards them, the withholding of that which is just, the sundering of domestic ties, the traffic for gain in the bodies of men; these are

wrongs for which no man can lay his hand upon his heart and honestly or heartily apologize.

Equally will all accord with the correctness of the duties prescribed by the Assembly for those who are unhappily living under the system. To treat kindly their servants; to regard their feelings, rights, and relations; to educate, elevate and christianize, and prepare them for freedom, and ultimately, if practicable, to liberate them, and to labor for the universal abolition of slavery; these are the duties which commend themselves to the judgment and conscience of all reflecting men. Thus far, then, there is entire unanimity in the Church, with perhaps a very few unimportant exceptions, in concurring in the position of the General Assembly.

But there remain yet two points in the position of the Assembly concerning which there exists a wide difference of opinion. These are, that the abstract relation of master and slave is not in itself sinful; and the application of this principle to the holders of slaves in this country so as to admit them to the privileges of the Church. Of course those who deny that the relation is sinless, deny also the propriety of applying this doctrine so as to shield the slave-holder from exclusion from the Church.

It is contended by many that the relation itself is necessarily and in its own nature sinful. This is a fundamental principle with those who oppose the doctrine held by the Assembly on the subject of slavery. It will be important to examine this

principle somewhat carefully. If it cannot be proved unsound, then the position of the Assembly cannot be defended as right. On the other hand, if the incorrectness of this position can be made manifest, the Assembly is unanswerably justified. Let us then look carefully and candidly at it. The great question here is, what is this abstract relation? Let it be remembered that slavery is wholly a political institution. The relation is, then, the creature of civil law, of positive enactment. It consists in the possession of certain powers in law, by the master over the slave, and the subjection of the slave in law, in certain respects, to the master. The extent of the master's power must be defined by positive law, and may be greater or less, may be very great or very small, according to the pleasure of the legislature. All that is necessary to constitute this relation is, that a title be obtained by one man for another from the civil authorities. The relation then is a mere name in law. It does not necessarily imply the existence of those iniquitous laws which enjoin the treatment of the slave as a mere chattel, the withholding of instruction from him, or the disregarding of all his rights, interests, and feelings. It needs not be defined by them. It necessitates no neglect of the mutual duties which as men or christians they owe to each other. It makes no alteration of the natural or moral relations in which the parties stand toward each other necessary. It may, where it already exists, be continued; and where it does not exist it may be constituted, for the protection of one or both the

parties from evils which, under the circumstances, would otherwise overtake them, while all their mutual duties as men and christians are faithfully discharged. It may be sustained by those who at the same time are bearing distinct and strong testimony against the system of slavery, and laboring for its final abolition. It may be sustained by the consent of the parties, and expressly with the view of enabling the master to accomplish greater good for the slave than otherwise would be possible. Can a relation of which all this may be truly said, be pronounced sinful in itself? Does a mere name in law which does not necessarily change any moral or natural relation of the parties as men or christians, or unavoidably produce a neglect of any of their mutual duties, always and necessarily involve sin? No one will answer affirmatively who rightly distinguishes between names and things, relations and practices.

But the same conclusion may be reached by another line of reasoning. The instruction and example of the Apostles will furnish a conclusive argument on this subject. Let none start back however at this reference to the teachings of inspiration. Let none imagine that we bring this argument to prove that the slave system is right, or justified by the Apostles. They never taught doctrines which would sustain the American or any other system of slavery. The golden rule given by Christ, which is the very concentration of the divine law as it sets forth our social obligations and duties, would sweep away at a single stroke every

system of slavery from the earth. It is, however, an undeniable fact attested by the history of the times, that slavery of a character even worse than that which prevails in this country, existed in the Roman Empire at the period of the Apostles. It prevailed very extensively.

At a period a little later than the apostolic age, (A. D. 260,) the historian Gibbon estimates the number of slaves as equal to that of all other classes, or at least sixty millions. (Mill. Gib. vol. 1, p. 27.) Dr. Robertson regards their number as twice as large as that of the freemen of the Empire, or more than one hundred millions. And Mr. Blair supposes their number, from B. C. 146 to A. D. 222, to be three times as great as that of the freemen, or at least one hundred and fifty millions. (Mill. Gib. vol. 1, p. 479.)

It was also very severe. **“ Among the Romans more particularly slaves were held—‘pro nullis—pro mortuis—pro quadrupedibus’—for no men—for dead men—for beasts,—nay, were in a much worse condition than any cattle whatever.”* The master had the power of corporeal punishment at discretion, and prior to the time of Antonius, of life and death also. *“ For the slightest and most trivial offences they were cruelly scourged and condemned to hard labor; and the petty tyrant of his family, when exasperated by any real or apprehended injury, could nail them to a cross and make them die in a lingering and most miserable manner.*

*Horne's Introd. vol. 2, p. 166.

They were subjected to the lowest and severest toil. As a last insult upon their wretchedness, they were branded in the forehead, and a note of eternal disgrace and infamy publicly and indelibly impressed upon them." Now, as the Apostles labored very extensively in this Empire, they must necessarily have come in frequent contact with it. How, then, did they deal with it? In condemning slavery, (for beyond all question they condemned it,) they did not begin where many do, at the mere relation—the simple name in law—of master and slave. The New Testament does not contain a single denunciation of slave-holders, among whom the Apostles labored, such as is common at the present time. The Apostles condemned every evil that is inherent in every system of slavery. They taught great principles upon this subject. Their teaching, if followed, would remove every evil of every system. And when individuals are enlightened as to these evils, and led to avoid them from principle, they will sooner or later set aside the relation also as a matter of convenience and propriety, and as a means of hastening the final abolition of the whole system. The Apostles aimed at getting the heart right, and removing the real pressing evils of slavery. They labored to save the souls of both masters and slaves, confidently assured that the whole system would thus be most successfully destroyed. And the event proved the inspiration of their course. They no where condemned the mere legal relation. They never said to individuals, "you must cease to stand in the relation of masters

before you can enter the Church of Christ.” But they did say, “give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven;” and, “ye masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.” In other words, they commanded, “discharge toward your servants all the duties of man to man in this relation; and if they are the children of God, of christian to christian, as you expect to render an account to your great master on high.” The injunction implies clearly that the fact that they were masters did not necessarily involve them in guilt so as to exclude them from the Church. The description of the mutual duties of the parties plainly indicates that the relation might sinlessly exist. But it does not prove that the system under which this relation prevailed was righteous.

But some have contended that the Apostles always referred to hired domestics, and not slaves, when they gave the directions already noticed. Now let the facts above stated be remembered, that a system of slavery far more cruel than that which exists in this country prevailed very extensively in the Roman Empire in the apostolic age. That Empire, from its center to its circumference, almost, was the field of the Apostles’ labors. And Paul, who was pre-eminently the Apostle of the Gentiles, addressed letters describing the mutual duties of masters and servants to the churches of Ephesus (Eph. 6: 5-9) and Colosse, (Col. 3: 22, 4: 1).

And he directed Timothy (1 Tim. 6: 1) and Titus (Tit. 2: 9) in discharging the duties of ministers of the gospel, wherever they went, to do the same. So that wherever Paul and Timothy and Titus went throughout the Empire, they inculcated relative duties which implied the existence of this relation. Peter enjoined the same duties when he addressed the churches and christians "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia" (1 Pet. 2: 18). No one acquainted with the extent of Roman slavery will dare to assume that the Apostles never inculcated these duties upon persons who held slaves, or were slaves under the Roman law. But if they did teach these duties to masters and slaves, then the conclusion is inevitable that the mere relation was not denounced as in itself and necessarily sinful.

The only possible escape from this position is by denying that the terms used by the Apostles signifying master and slave in the proper sense. And it is confidently asserted by some that they have not this signification, but that they point out a hired servant and the person employing him. That they do not exclusively signify master and slave is freely admitted. But that these terms, or their equivalents in Latin, are precisely those commonly used to designate persons sustaining this relation among the Romans and Greeks, no scholar will deny. And no one can suppose that the Apostles would use these words in a country where slavery so extensively prevailed in any other than their popular meaning. To have done so would certainly have

mi-*led* those whom they were attempting to instruct and save. That they referred to slaves in the proper sense will be apparent from the definition of the terms used.

The word *Oiketes* is used by Peter, (1 Pet. 2: 18), "servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;" and also by Luke (Acts 10: 7), "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants." It signifies "one living in the same house with another; and by implication, a domestic servant, a household slave." The primary meaning of the term is a domestic. It may mean a hired servant. It may point out a slave. But *Doulos* is the word which Paul uses in (Eph. 6: 5), "servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh;" and in (1 Cor. 7: 21), "Art thou called being a servant care not for it;" and in Col. 3: 22, "Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh;" and 4: 1, "Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal; and in 1 Tim. 6: 1, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke," &c.; and also in Tit. 2: 9, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters." It signifies "a man in a servile state, a male slave or servant, one who servilely yields to another, a servant of God." The primary signification of the word is a slave in the absolute sense. Its secondary meaning is a servant in any sense. The signification of the terms, then, and the fact that they were used in the language of every day

life to point out slaves under the Greek and Roman systems, clearly show that the Apostles intended to refer to slaves in the proper sense. If any confirmation of this were necessary, it would be found in the description given of these servants. Paul says, (1 Tim. 6: 1), "Let as many servants as are *under the yoke* count their own masters worthy of all honor." The descriptive expression, "under the yoke," used here, had its origin in the following custom, which prevailed among the Greeks and Romans: When captives were taken in war, two forks were fixed in the earth a short space apart, and a spear was laid across from the one to the other. This was called a yoke. And under this the captives were constrained to pass as a declaration of their complete subjugation, and their entire subjection to the authority of their conquerors. They were afterwards often sold as slaves *sub corona*, as it was called, for the benefit of the public revenue, or the payment of soldiers. And sometimes they were held as slaves of the State. And their servitude was of the severest kind known to the system. As, therefore, these captives were made slaves of the lowest grade, the expression "under the yoke" soon came to signify a slave in the most abject condition. A servant under the yoke was, therefore, an individual under a bondage of the most absolute kind. If, then, it were even doubtful whether Paul meant slaves in the proper sense when he addressed servants, the question is settled beyond all rational controversy when he describes them as under the yoke; as this language

cannot by any possibility apply to hired domestics. He could only mean persons in slavery. In confirmation of this it may be observed that christians have taken the yoke of Christ—are under the yoke to him. Now is not his authority over them universal, supreme, absolute? And is not their subjection complete? It does not alter the case here that his authority is legitimate, and their subjection a matter of choice and pleasure. The signification of the terms is not changed. The authority is just as absolute, and they are just as much “under the yoke,” as if their subjection was constrained. It is, therefore, but a silly play upon words unworthy a candid inquirer after truth, to answer this whole argument by inquiring is Christ a slave-holder? And are christians slaves? The relation of the parties is that of supreme authority and absolute subjection. Those, therefore, who are under the yoke to a fellow man, are under his absolute authority, in a state of complete subjection, are slaves in the proper sense. Clearly, then, the Apostles meant Roman slaves in the passages referred to.

Of the words translated *master*, it may also be remarked, that they are those used in common conversation to designate the master of slaves. And the Apostles use them in connection with those signifying slaves as relative terms. If, then, the one set of words points out slaves, as has already satisfactorily appeared, the other must signify the master of slaves. The same thing is apparent from the definition of the terms.

But even many ultraists admit that Philemon was

a slave, and that Paul refers to slaves when he says, "art thou called, being a servant, care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather" (1 Cor. 7: 21. Phil. 16). Now the very same word is used in both these cases that is employed in most of the passages already referred to. And if it signifies a slave in these instances, it certainly does in the others also.

But, if these terms do not refer to slaves in the proper sense, then there is no reference to them in the New Testament. But it surely cannot be that the Apostles addressed so many churches, in a country where the slaves constituted more than one-half the entire population, and yet never referred to them. It is utterly incredible that they lived and labored to spread christianity in an empire where not less than sixty millions of the inhabitants sustained the relation of slaves, of the most abject kind, to twenty or thirty millions of masters—where slavery was the most prominent feature of society—and yet never referred to these different classes, or gave any directions for the conduct of persons sustaining this relation. But if they referred to these persons it was by these terms. If they gave any such directions it was in these passages. All rational doubt, therefore, as to the meaning of these terms must be dissipated.

Kurios is the word used by Paul in Eph. 6: 5, 9. "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh;" "And ye masters do the same things to them, forbearing threatening;" and in Col. 4: 1, "Masters give unto your

servants that which is just and equal." It signifies "a possessor, an owner, a master, one possessed of honor and influence." It is derived from a word which means to reduce under authority. Its primary meaning, therefore, is, one who owns, or has the mastery over another. In a lower sense it indicates one who has authority or influence of any kind. When, therefore, it is used as a relative to those terms which signify slaves, it plainly points out the master of those slaves. But the word more frequently used by the Apostles is,

Despotes. Paul uses this word in 1 Tim. 6: 1, 2, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor;" "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren;" and in Tit. 2: 9, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters." Peter also uses it in 1 Pet. 2: 18, "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear." It signifies "a lord, a master of servants, a sovereign, God." It is derived from a word which means to govern, to obtain dominion. It is applied to Christ by Peter, 2 Pet, 2: 1, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies even denying the lord that bought them;" and also by Jude, Jud. 4, "Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The prominent and almost exclusive meaning of this term, therefore, is, one who has the highest

authority, which the nature of the case in which it is used admits. Evidently, then, when this word is employed in connection with one which signifies a slave, it points out the man who is in the full and proper sense the master of that slave. The definition of the terms, therefore, plainly shows that the Apostles addressed the masters of slaves in the passages referred to. Besides all this, the exhortations addressed to these persons are unsuitable to any other relation. Would it not be incongruous to exhort those who had hired assistants to forbear threatening" them? Would it not be absurd even to the degree of being ridiculous, to exhort hired laborers "to be obedient to them that are their masters according to the flesh," "to obey in all things their masters," "to count their own masters worthy of all honor," "to care not for the fact that they are called as servants," "to take it patiently when they suffer," even after having done well, from froward masters; if "they may be made free to use it"? But upon the supposition that masters and slaves are addressed, the exhortations are appropriate and beautiful. Combine, then, the considerations that slavery existed very extensively in the field of the Apostles' labors, that the terms used were those employed in the common intercourse of life to designate master and slave, that these terms do primarily and properly signify master and slave, that they must have used them in their popular meaning or misled multitudes, and that their exhortations are unsuitable to any other relation; and it will appear undeniably manifest

that the Apostles addressed masters and slaves in the proper sense, enjoining upon them the mutual duties growing out of this relation. And Paul clearly teaches that both these parties, while standing in this relation, may be the children of God. He says, "let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters let them not despise them because they are brethren; but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit." (1 Tim. 6: 1-2.) Now as both parties are here described as christians, and immediate emancipation is not enjoined, it is strongly implied that the relation may continue. The conclusion then is inevitable that the New Testament does not condemn the mere relation of master and slave as necessarily and under all circumstances sinful. A proper view of the relation itself, and of the teachings and practice of the Apostles in reference to it concur, therefore, in establishing the doctrine that it is not in its own nature, and under all circumstances, sinful.

And this view is in precise accordance with the decisions of common sense. The application of the golden rule often demands a course of conduct corresponding with this position. As an illustration, take the case of an eminent southern statesman. A number of slaves were bequeathed to him by a stranger. But in the event of his not accepting them, they were to be disposed of in such a

way as would have left them in bondage for life. He knew that if he received them he could, sooner or later, liberate them and send them to Liberia, where they and their posterity might be free and prosperous and happy. But if he accepted the legacy he would at once become, and must for some time remain, a slave master. He did not hesitate, but became their master and retained this relation until he effected his benevolent design. Did he do wrong? Should he have left them to drag out a miserable existence in severe bondage? Or do not the law of God and the spirit of the gospel both approve his course? Vary the illustration. The slave is aged, or lone, or without habits of management, or known means of subsistence if cast upon his own resources. He feels that if liberated he will have great difficulty in supplying his own wants, will be no more respected or happy than in his present situation, and will be exposed to many evils from which his position now defends him. He is, therefore inclined to remain. He asks not to have his condition changed. His master sees the evils and dangers to which he would, if set free, be exposed. He is honestly convinced that great injury would result to the slave by at once casting him off. He is unable to place him where his condition would be really improved; and yet he feels bound to promote his good as far as practicable. Would not christian benevolence suffer him to retain his relation to this servant even during his life, whilst he protects him, promotes his comfort, and labors to advance his highest interests? Suppose,

still farther, the master and the slave are brethren in the Lord, as often occurs. They love as brethren. The master strives to give the slave a fair compensation for his toil, and render him as comfortable as possible. The slave is satisfied with the treatment and reward he receives, is unambitious, contented and happy. And in view of his inexperience in the world, the disadvantageous circumstances of the free people of color in this country, and the doubts which mingle with the hope of rendering his condition better, he is disposed to remain. He is unwilling to be set free. May the master continue this relation? Does the golden rule forbid it? Or suppose a slave is about to be sold to a brutal slave-dealer, and torn for life from all he loves. He appeals to a christian acquaintance to purchase him that he may still enjoy the endearments of home and friends. To purchase him is to become a slave-master; but the only possible way of rescuing him from a life of wretchedness, complying with his desire, and securing for him the happiness for which he longs. Does christian benevolence—does the spirit of the gospel—does the law of God or the love of Christ forbid it? The ingenuous christian will never answer affirmatively. Scripture, reason, and the common sense of christians, therefore, concur in sustaining this first position of the General Assembly.

But to all this it is replied, “how can that relation be sinless out of which grow such enormous evils?” It would be enough to reply to this that the sinlessness of the relation has been proved from

the Scriptures. Those, therefore, who urge objections are found fighting against God. Here it may with propriety be said, "let God be true, but every man a liar." But aside from this the answer is obvious. The system of slavery has its origin in the depraved heart of man. And the evils result from the practical workings of the system under the influence of his depraved dispositions, and not simply from the relation. The fountain of these evils lies in human depravity. The relation simply opens a channel through which poisonous streams may flow out. But if the disposition to perpetuate these wrongs be taken away from the heart, they will not be committed; if the fountain be dried up, of course the channel will also be dry. The bitter waters will not then gush out. The relation is but the hedge behind which the system may, like a poisonous Upas, bear deadly fruit. But it does not cause the evils complained of. If it remain a mere name in law, and do not give rise to a change of moral relations or mutual practice between the parties, as it need not, it cannot produce the evils which excite our abhorrence. The most that can be said of the relation is, that it may be made the occasion of these evils where the disposition to perpetuate them exists, just as the possession of gold may be the occasion of theft or murder, or as the conjugal or parental relation may be the occasion of cruelty which otherwise could not exist. But none condemn the possession of gold, or the relation of husband and wife. The objection is

therefore of no force against the relation of master and slave.

But these evils are specified, and each of them is charged upon the relation, which is, therefore, held to be wrong. It is alleged: That it originated in fraud, or theft, or violence, and must, therefore, be always wrong. It may be remarked of all the following objections to the doctrine here held, these arguments to prove the necessary sinfulness of the relation, that they involve two fallacies. The one is, that of reasoning from generals to particulars, from the whole to a specific part. It consists in predicating of the relation, that which is true only of the system of slavery. The other consists in taking it for granted that what may occur, must take place, that legal authority to do wrong necessitates wrong doing. These fallacies run through, and vitiate all the reasoning of those who hold the sinfulness of the relation.

To the argument just stated it may be replied that, the system of slavery unquestionably originated in human selfishness, and was established by fraud, or violence. But the system and the relation are very different things. And whilst the former originated in selfishness, the latter may be instituted in pure benevolence. An estate is to be divided among surviving children. It includes a number of slaves. The estate will not suffice to liberate them and place them in circumstances at all favorable. Some of them sustain toward each other the various domestic relations, and some of them are incapable of providing for themselves. If they are

sold they must be separated, and perhaps thrown into very unfavorable circumstances. They join in appealing to the heirs of the estate to become their purchasers, and to make such arrangements as not to separate those bound together by domestic ties, and to provide for the aged and the feeble. The heirs, though they abhor the slave system, may, out of a simple desire to promote the interests and happiness of the slaves, make the desired arrangements. Or, the slave may be owned by a vicious or oppressive master, or be about to be sold away from all he loves, and exposed to the danger of being carried where he will not enjoy the means of grace. With the sole view of remedying the evils under which the slave labors, or preventing those he dreads, a christian may become his owner—may assume, according to his own desire, the relation of master to him. In both these cases, and no doubt many such exist, the relation originated in benevolence, and not in fraud, or theft, or violence. It is farther urged that it involves great physical evils to the slave, such as a deprivation of the comforts of life, poverty, excessive toil, and bodily suffering. But does a mere name in law, which creates no obligation upon the part of the master to inflict any of these, necessarily involve their existence? Besides, our General Assembly forbids all unkind or cruel treatment of slaves, and enjoins upon the lower judicatories to strive to prevent such shameful conduct. As tolerated by the Church, then, the relation cannot produce these evils. And it is notorious that the slaves of

christian masters, frequently if not generally, have their physical wants and comforts as fully provided for as the poor of any country.

But it is alleged still farther that it reduces men to the condition of the brutes. This is untrue in some respects, even of the whole system. The slave has still, even in law, some rights which recognize his humanity and distinguish him from the brute. Much less is it true of the relation. It must also be remembered that the Assembly forbids the members of the Church who hold slaves to regard them as mere chattels—as mere property—but as rational, accountable, immortal beings; nor does it license, but on the other hand forbids the traffic in them for gain or convenience. The objection is, therefore, untrue.

Again, it is affirmed that this relation deprives the slave of the earnings of his toil. But manifestly it does not necessarily produce this result. The law which constitutes the relation does not forbid the giving of that which is just and equal; and the General Assembly enjoins upon masters to act in the spirit of the golden rule, “whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them.” So that as the Church tolerates it, the relation cannot prevent the slave from receiving a compensation for his toil. And as a matter of fact it is believed that many christian masters give their slaves as full a compensation as many of the laboring poor of the north receive. But it is still farther objected that to sustain this relation is to exhibit an example which encourages wicked men

to commit the wrongs authorized by the slave system, and, therefore, involves guilt. And no doubt just so far as encouragement is given to the practice of oppression, it is sinful. The christian may not do any thing which legitimately furnishes encouragement in sinful practices. And in smaller matters he is even bound to deny himself what is clearly his right, rather than give occasion of offence. But in affairs of more importance, in which his interests or his duties to others are deeply involved, he may enjoy his right, even though wicked men should take occasion from it to do wickedly.

But the sustaining of this relation need not necessarily prove an encouragement of wrong-doing on the part of others. It can, without doubt, be sustained in such a manner as to prevent all such influence. Nay, it may exist while the parties are exerting a powerful influence for the final abolition of slavery. However many christian slave-holders, therefore, do set an injurious example, the relation manifestly does not render this necessary, and is not, therefore, liable to this objection. The position of the General Assembly, therefore, remains unaffected by all these objections.

But the second particular in the position of the Assembly finds equally numerous opposers. Those who hold that the relation is, under all circumstances, and in its own nature, sinful, apply their doctrine here, and sweep indignantly away at one stroke the doctrine of the Assembly in this particular. The practical application of the doctrine that

the relation is not necessarily sinful to those who profess religion in the southern portion of our country, and at the same time are slave-masters, has awaked the thunders of fanaticism, and called down the unmitigated censures of the enemies of the Church. It has also induced some of its conscientious but misguided members to forsake its pale. Let us look at the doctrine held by the Assembly in this particular. It may be thus expressed: "The mere fact that any persons in the southern portion of this country sustain the relation of masters to slaves, cannot, without regard to circumstances, be pronounced a sin, the renunciation of which should be made a condition of membership in the Church."

It will not do to infer, as many do, the incorrectness of this position from the allegation that the relation itself is sinful. This has already been proved untrue. An inference is sometimes much more easily drawn than proved. But many affirm that the doctrine of the sinlessness of the relation cannot be practically applied to any of the holders of slaves in this country. But has this ever been proved? Has any honest and vigorous attempt been made to prove it? Can it ever be proved? Every slave-holder who is a professor of religion, must first be visited, and his conduct in this relation, and all the circumstances under which he sustains it, must be fully ascertained, before such a proposition could possibly be established. The burden of this proof lies upon those who make the affirmation. They have never attempted to prove

it in the only way in which it is capable of being proved—that is, by actual investigation. It is easy to apply general principles to particular cases. But in such applications, peculiar circumstances are necessarily omitted. And in doing this there is extreme danger of condemning the righteous with the wicked. Very great evil is thus often produced. Those who are thus condemned are excited and exasperated by the glaring injustice of their condemnation. And those who thus condemn often become fanatical in their denunciation of the condemned, as the case appears to them in the light of these general principles so plain. Every case of slave-holding by a professor of religion must, therefore, be investigated before it can possibly be absolutely determined that the relation is never sustained in so abstract a form, in this country, as to render it sinless. And if but a few cases can be found where it cannot be pronounced sinful, the Assembly will be justified in taking the position now contended for, and especially after having so distinctly and repeatedly condemned all the wrongs of the slave system. And that many instances do exist in which this relation is sustained without sin, there is strong presumption in the circumstances of the case. There have been in all, since the origin of the Presbyterian Church in the southern portion of this country until the present, perhaps from one hundred to one hundred and fifty thousand of her members who have held slaves. These have, aside from their holding slaves, given as good evidence as members of the Church gen-

erally do, that they were really the children of God. Can it be supposed that all these have lived amid the light of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries without discovering that they were guilty of man-stealing? Or is it to be imagined that they had not the honesty to avow their convictions, the candor to acknowledge their wrongs, or the consistency to forsake them? Who could admit the truth of these suppositions? But the admission of them becomes still more difficult, when it is remembered that a majority—in some periods a very large majority—have deplored the existence of slavery and all its evils, and many have labored to mitigate those evils and exterminate the system. The fact, then, that these persons generally give credible evidence of christian character, enjoy the light of the nineteenth century, deplore the evils of the slave system, long, and in many instances, labor for their removal, furnishes a strong presumption that many at least sustain the relation in a manner which leaves them free from such guilt as should exclude them from the Church.

Nor is it difficult to conceive of such circumstances surrounding slave-holding christians as would justify the continuance for a period at least of this relation. It is well known that in many of the slave States stringent laws exist against emancipation, compelling the master to come under bonds for the good behavior of his emancipated slaves, or remove them from the State. And then, in default of these, the liberated slaves may be taken up by public authority and sold into hopeless

bondage again. The master may be convinced that he dare not enter into bonds for them. He may be unable to transfer them to a place where they might enjoy freedom or assist them to make provision for a subsistence. And they may be utterly unwilling to be emancipated under these circumstances. Must he then disregard their wishes and their good, according to his convictions and theirs, and expose himself and family, and his slaves too, to injury, if not temporal ruin, by emancipating them, or be denounced as a man-stealer and excluded from the Church ; or, may he on the other hand retain the legal relation, gratify their preferences, take the course which, according to his conviction will best promote their real good and his, and faithfully discharge toward them the duties of man to man? The answer may safely be left with every man of ordinary discrimination. The circumstances may be varied with the same result.

The master has received his slaves by marriage or as an inheritance, (and a large portion of christian slave-holders at the south have received their slaves in one or other of these ways.) They are, it may be, children or aged persons, or lone women, incapable of providing for themselves ; or, what is equally as great a difficulty, they are ignorant, thriftless, without habits of management or principles to withhold them from the vortex of vice and ruin. He feels that he is under obligation, as they have been thrown upon his hands in the providence of God, to educate them, and if possible prepare

them for taking the place of men, and enjoying rational liberty, obtaining a comfortable subsistence and avoiding the ruin of vice. All this cannot be accomplished in a day, nor yet in several years. If he emancipate them first, he may be totally unable to discharge these duties towards them. They express a willingness to remain with him for these purposes. May he, without sin, retain the legal relation of master over them for the time necessary to accomplish these objects, giving them in the mean time "that which is just and equal" in other respects? Or must he at once disregard these obligations, dissolve this relation, trample upon what he is convinced is their highest interest, turn them loose to live or die, to rise or sink as they may, or be denounced as deeply guilty and excluded from the visible Church? Apply the judgment of common sense. Let the principles of christian charity have place. Then say, may he not for a time continue a slave-holder without being subjected to exclusion from the Church? Now these circumstances might be varied indefinitely, and the conclusion be equally manifest.

It is plain, however, that all this shows only that the relation may continue with reference to the good of the slave, with his own consent, or with a view to its abolition as soon as an opportunity is, in the providence of God, afforded. And the writer is disposed strongly to hold, that if slaves are held by masters with any degree of the spirit of the slave system, a spirit of selfishness, avarice and oppression, or for the profit of the master without regard

to the interests of the slaves, there is wrong. But clearly, where slaves are children, or aged and infirm, or where the masters are utterly unable to emancipate them so as to promote their good thereby, and no opportunity in the providence of God occurs for so doing, or where the slaves, either through satisfaction with their present condition or conviction that freedom would not be a blessing, are unwilling to be set free, circumstances exist which render the continuance of the relation proper.

But do these circumstances exist in the case of any of the Presbyterian slave-holders of the south? That they do surround them all is more than we are prepared to affirm. It would be altogether unlike earth and fallen man, if all could be justified in holding their slaves in this way. Their existence in many cases is, however, perfectly conceivable. A survey of the extent and character of the country in which slavery prevails, and the condition of the inhabitants, would naturally lead us to expect to find them. The character, in other respects, of those members of the Church who hold slaves, begets a strong presumption that they do exist. And with scarce a dissenting voice, they are held to exist by southern christians, by southern Presbyterians. And there is no decisive proof that such circumstances do not surround many of them. All this seems almost to demonstrate their existence. We safely, therefore, conclude, that many southern slave-holders, who are members of the Church, are environed with such circumstances as justify their sustaining this relation.

That the relation is not, in its own nature, necessarily sinful, has already been sufficiently shown. That many members of the Presbyterian Church in the south sustain this relation, under circumstances and in a manner which render them free from a charge of criminality, has now been made apparent. The conclusion is, therefore, inevitable, that the General Assembly has taken ground essentially according to truth.

In view of all this, and proceeding upon the principle that where freedom from guilt is possible, every man, and especially every christian, is to be regarded and treated as innocent until he is proved guilty, the Assembly have rightly declared that "domestic slavery," or the holding of slaves, "under the circumstances in which it exists in the southern portion of our country, is no bar to christian communion."

This position the Assembly have always held, having expressed it in 1795 in substance, reiterated it in 1815, and set it forth still more distinctly in 1845.

But it is argued by some that the dictation of this truth on the part of the Assembly, is adapted to do harm; that it tends to soothe the troubled consciences of many slave-holders, and furnish an excuse for their continuing to practice the wrongs of the slave system. The writer is free to confess that he was, in 1845, among the number of those who thought the action of the Assembly inexpedient. But every man and every ecclesiastical body must of course form their own judgment in such a

case. And for that judgment they are responsible. Under this sentiment the Assembly acted. They felt constrained to utter this testimony by the frequency and importunity with which they were petitioned upon this very point. The responsibility in this case, then, lies mainly with those who urged the Assembly to declare the relation sinful. It is not, however, in the nature of truth to do injury or give license for the commission of wrong. If unprincipled men make the truth an occasion of practicing wickedness, they are themselves responsible, and not those who utter the truth when called to do so. Nor can the statement that a man may, without sin, hold slaves legitimately, furnish any shield for the practice of oppression or wrong. And this is especially true in view of the previous testimony which the Assembly had borne against the system of slavery with all its specific evils.

But it is also urged against the General Assembly that they have not, with as much frequency and earnestness as the case demanded, expressed their condemnation of slavery, and enjoined efforts for its removal. It is not impossible that the objection is true. And yet it is questionable whether any thing important would have been gained by the frequent reiteration of the same sentiments. And then it is beyond a doubt, that on several occasions the Assembly took the course they did in view of the ultraism manifested by those very persons who now complain of the testimony borne. The ultra and fanatical manner in which the subject of slavery was treated, and the slave-holder denounced,

by many in the north, rendered it often inexpedient for the Assembly to express themselves upon the subject, lest by increasing the excitement disastrous consequences might follow, whilst no real good could possibly be done. Had they, as often as they were importuned to do so, repeated their testimony against slavery, the southern portion of the Church might have regarded them as actuated by the fanaticism of the north, and been led to extreme and injurious measures. Hence the propriety of refusing to speak upon this subject as often as ultraists desired. The testimony borne, and the course pursued by the Assembly are, therefore, in the main, manifestly according to truth and right.

But, viewed in another aspect there is a moral sublimity in the course pursued by the General Assembly. A powerfully conservative influence has been exerted by this course, not only upon the Church, but also upon the community. There existed antagonistic ultraisms in the Church and in the world, which, unrestrained, would have driven the plow-share of division through the very midst of our Zion. Both these must be calmly and firmly withstood. From the north an immense wave of abolition fanaticism came dashing and foaming. From the south came rolling up with terrific aspect a wave of pro-slavery fanaticism. From opposite extremes they threatened to overwhelm the good old ship of Presbyterianism, freighted as she is with the hopes of a lost world. Already these mountain waves had dashed in pieces two noble vessels,—(the Baptist and Methodist Episcopal

Churches.) They simultaneously broke upon her. They dashed over her. Every timber seemed to bend under the mighty pressure. The period was one of deep and painful anxiety. Her friends, trembling, feared that all was lost. Many hearts arose in prayer and faith to Him who holds the winds in his fists, and controls the hearts of the children of men. Every eye was turned to the scene of conflict. But see, she rises. She rights. Steadily she takes her onward course. All is safe. The force of the waves is spent. The fury of the storm is over. Oil is cast upon the troubled waters. With increased confidence in her capacity, the moderate, the wise, and the good rally around her and rejoice in her steady onward course. The calm, dignified, consistent, and just course of the Assembly, from the beginning of the recent powerful agitation on the subject of slavery, has kept the Church, whilst other bodies have been broken into fragments; has held ultraists in obedience until their ultraism has given place to calmer views; has secured the confidence of the more observing of the people of the world, and a high degree of peace and spiritual prosperity to the Church, and has left her free to apply all her energies to the work of enlarging her borders, the conversion of the world, yea, and the salvation of the poor down-trodden slave. Under the guidance of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church alone, with the exception of the Protestant Episcopal, Lutheran, and German Reformed churches, has remained united, exerting a commanding influence for good,

whilst other bodies have been rent asunder, and their fragments left to spend their energies in mutual hostilities. She has weathered every storm, and now under the smiles of God's countenance the prospering gales of his providence and spirit, she moves forward peacefully and prosperously. Calm, while many were agitated; true, while many wandered in the mazes of error; dignified and right, while many were foaming out fanaticism; peaceful, while others were rent with fearful storms; and fixed and firm while all around were terrific upheavings, the Assembly have presented a spectacle of moral grandeur. The course pursued by the Assembly has also been powerfully felt for the preservation of the union of the States, and is still destined to be powerfully felt. The ties which bind together these States are not all political nor mercenary. Some of them are also moral. One of the most, if not the most potent, of these is, the existence and union of the Presbyterian Church North and South. This brings many of the inhabitants of both sections of the country into higher, holier, stronger bonds of union than any political or commercial relationship could. And while the christian confidence, the christian affection, the christian co-operation and oneness of general feeling and interest between northern and southern Presbyterians, remain as they have heretofore, it will be exceedingly difficult to induce them to consent to the severing of their political relations, or to take a course politically which would rupture those holy and delightful bonds of christian

brotherhood. The course of the General Assembly, therefore, which has been "the midst, between extremes, and equally removed from both," and from which has resulted, under the divine blessing, so much good, temporal and spiritual, cannot but be regarded as, in the main, according to truth and right, and as challenging our high admiration.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HAS DONE AND IS
DOING ON BEHALF OF THE SLAVES.

When we speak of efforts made by the Church for the spread of the gospel, we find much cause for humiliation. In all departments of labor for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, the Presbyterian Church, like every other branch of Zion, has fallen far below the standard of duty. And this is, no doubt, especially true of her attempts to secure the salvation of the colored race in the southern part of our own country. In the inscrutable providence of God these Africans have been cast, as heathen, into the very midst of the Church. Literal heathen, degraded to the lowest possible point, they were, when they were brought to this country; and the lapse of several generations has raised many of them, in religious knowledge as a general fact, but a little above heathenism. To many of them, nearly all the vices of heathenism still cling, whilst they have adopted others peculiar to the circumstances in which they are placed. In this situation have they been lying from one generation to another, at the very door of the Church. But they have been lamentably neglected. And yet, while truth and candor demand this confession, it is pleasant to be able to add, that they have not

been wholly neglected by the Church, and especially by the Presbyterian Church.

As early as 1738, the United Brethren formed a mission to the slaves in South Carolina. It was, however, broken up the next year, by the death of one of its missionaries, and the removal of the other to Pennsylvania. The second to enter this field of benevolent labor were members of the Presbyterian Church.

In 1747, a little more than forty years after the organization of the first Presbytery in this country, and about twenty years after the formation of the first Synod, the Rev. Samuel Davies and the Rev. John Tod, members of the Presbytery of Hanover embracing eastern Virginia, began to labor for their spiritual good. In 1755 Mr. Davies gave the following account of his labors among them :*

“The inhabitants of Virginia are computed to be about three hundred thousand men, the one-half of which number are supposed to be negroes. The number of those who attend my ministry at particular times is uncertain; but generally about three hundred give a stated attendance; and never have I been so struck with the appearance of an assembly, as when I have glanced my eye to that part of the meeting-house where they usually sit, adorned, for so it seemed to me, with so many black countenances, eagerly attentive to every word they heard, and frequently bathed in tears.

“A considerable number of them, (about five

*Thoughts on Rel. In. Slaves, by W. S. Plumer.

hundred,) have been baptised, after a proper time for instruction, and having given credible evidences, not only of their acquaintance with the important doctrines of the christian religion, but also of a deep sense of them upon their minds, attested by a life of strict piety and holiness. As they are not sufficiently polished to dissemble with a good grace, they express the sentiments of their souls so much in the language of simple nature, and with such genuine indications of sincerity, that it is impossible to suspect their professions, when attended with a truly christian life and exemplary conduct. My worthy friend Mr. Tod, minister of the next congregation, has nearly the same number under his instructions, who, he tells me, discover the same serious turn of mind. In short, there are multitudes of them in different places, who are willing and eagerly desirous to be instructed, and embrace every opportunity of acquainting themselves with the doctrines of the gospel; and though they have generally very little help to learn them to read, yet to my agreeable surprise, many of them, by dint of application at their leisure hours, have made such progress that they can read a plain author intelligibly, and especially their Bibles."

Mr. Davies obtained from an association in London, Bibles and Hymn Books, and distributed them among the slaves. In speaking of the effect of these books he says:

"Sundry of them (that is, the negroes,) lodged in my kitchen all night, and sometimes when I have awaked about two or three o'clock in the

morning, a torrent of sacred harmony poured into my chamber, and carried my mind away to heaven. In this seraphic exercise some of them spend almost the whole night."

He afterwards adds that two Sabbaths before he had the pleasure of seeing forty of them around the table of the Lord, all of whom made a credible profession of christianity, and several of them with unusual evidences of sincerity; and that he believed there were more than a thousand negroes who attended upon his ministry at different places where he alternately officiated.

The labors of Rev. Robert Henry seem also to have been much blessed to the negroes in Virginia. The center of his operations was Cub creek, in Charlotte county. Mr. Henry commenced his labors some time after Mr. Davies.

Mr. Henry was succeeded by Rev. Drury Lacy. During Mr. Lacy's ministrations at Cub creek, there were about two hundred black members added to the Church. Several black elders were appointed and set apart to superintend these black members.

Mr. Lacy was succeeded by Rev. John H. Rice, D. D. He, however, did but little in the cause of the slaves, as it began to decline as soon as Mr. Lacy ceased to labor in Charlotte. Yet the old records of the General Assembly, and of the General Assembly's Board of Missions, show that his labor was not in vain in the Lord.

In 1807 the Presbytery of Hanover addressed a circular to the Churches under their care, solemnly

exhorting them not to neglect their duty to their servants.

About the time of the labors of Mr. Henry at Cub creek, (1760,) the Rev. Henry Patillo, pastor of Grassy creek and Nutbush churches, in Granville county, North Carolina, was also laboring successfully among the same class of people. But we are not able to give the particulars of his labor and success. Of one thing, however, we are well certified, and that is, that the good effects of his labors have not ceased to be felt extensively to this day.

That the judicatories of our Church have, from its early history, looked with deep interest upon this field of labor appears from their frequently enjoining the attention to the religious instruction of the slaves, and making other arrangements for their religious training. Thus, in 1786, the following case of conscience was overtured to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, viz.:

“Whether christian masters or mistresses ought in duty to have such children baptised as are under their care, though born of parents not in the communion of any Church?”

“Upon this overture the Synod are of opinion that christian masters and mistresses, whose religious profession and conduct are such as to give them a right to the ordinance of baptism for their own children, may, and ought to dedicate the children of their household to God in that ordinance, when they have no scruples of conscience to the contrary.”

At the same meeting of the Synod, it was over-tured whether christian slaves, having children, at the entire discretion of unchristian masters, and not having it in their power to instruct them in religion, are bound to have them baptised; and whether a christian minister in this predicament ought to baptise them?"

The Synod answered both these inquiries in the affirmative.

In 1816 the General Assembly answered this question, "ought baptism, on the promise of the master, to be administered to the children of slaves?" as follows, viz.:

"1. That it is the duty of masters who are members of the Church, to present the children of parents in servitude to the ordinance of baptism, provided they are in a situation to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, thus securing them the rich advantages which the gospel promises.

"2. That it is the duty of christian ministers to inculcate this doctrine, and to baptise all children of this description, when presented to them by their masters."

When the convention was called, in 1792, to form a constitution for the State of Kentucky, the venerable patriarch of the Presbyterian Church in that State, Rev. David Rice, published a pamphlet entitled "Slavery inconsistent with justice and good policy," and in a powerful argument urged the adoption of a system of gradual emancipation. And in 1794 the Presbytery of Transylvania, then

covering the entire State, resolved that slaves should be taught to read the Scriptures and prepared for freedom. Two years later, 1796, they earnestly recommended to the people under their care, all the Presbyterians of the State, "to emancipate such of their slaves as they may think fit subjects for liberty, and that they take every possible measure, by teaching their young slaves to read, and giving them such other instruction as may be in their power to prepare them for freedom."

The result of these early efforts to secure the preparation of the slaves for freedom, and to bring about finally their emancipation, was seen in the late contest in that State. We are assured that the ministry of the Presbyterian Church were almost to a man staunch emancipationists, and a very large majority of the eldership and of the membership were equally opposed to the continuance of slavery.

These statements show that from its earliest history the Presbyterian Church has taken an interest in this field of labor, and has to some considerable extent occupied it. We have not the means of tracing the history of her efforts on behalf of the down-trodden slaves. It is a fact, however, of deep interest, and cheering to the hearts and hopes of the friends of Zion, that concern for these poor abused sons of Ham has greatly increased, and efforts for salvation have greatly multiplied during the last ten years, in the Church. This will fully appear from the resolutions and plans of effort adopted by the Southern Synods and Presbyteries, within that period; and also from the fact that within the same period

the General Assembly has repeatedly called the attention of the Church and the Board of Missions to this field of labor, has directed the appointment of an agency connected with the Board of Missions for this field especially, has directed the addition of a column to the statistical tables published with her minutes from year to year, that the whole Church may know how many of these despised people are members of her communion, and what progress is making in the work of their conversion, and what still remains to be done on their behalf, and has commenced the work through the Board of Missions of sending missionaries to labor for them exclusively.

The following is an extract from the minutes of the Synod of Alabama for 1845, exhibiting their views and plan of laboring for the good of the slaves:

“The committee on the instruction of the colored population made their report, which was received and adopted, as follows:—

“The committee appointed to consider the claims of our colored population in the Church of God, for adequate religious instruction, beg leave to report that they have given this subject their best attention, and after careful consultation, are of opinion, that encumbered though this subject is, with many and formidable difficulties, yet, even if all that the heart of christian philanthropy might desire, cannot at once or very speedily be attained, still much may be done by judicious effort, and an *advance* be made towards the complete attainment of

the great object proposed, viz.: the thorough religious instruction of our whole colored population.

“With a view to this end the committee recommend to the Synod the adoption of the following resolution, viz:

“1. That in our opinion it is the duty of every owner or employer of slaves, to give them all possible facilities for receiving sound and judicious instruction in their duties to God, to society and to each other.

“2. That in every household, and on every plantation, the servants should, if practicable, be assembled daily to hear the reading of the Bible and to call upon God in prayer. That, especially on the Lord's day, they should be encouraged and required to attend the worship of God and the preaching of the word, when opportunity to do so can be afforded them. The children and the younger servants especially, should be carefully instructed in some appropriate compend of religious truth, as, e. g.—the shorter catechism; and such catechetical instruction can then only be effectually given when it is under the direction of the owner himself.

“3. That every Church Session is bound in duty to this class of our population, to see to it that among them and for their benefit, Sabbath schools be regularly conducted, in which familiar instruction shall be orally given, aided by the use of Jones' catechism or some similar compend.

“4. That it is the duty of every minister of the Gospel to pay special attention to the colored people, the servants of the members of his congre-

gation, and to impart religious instruction for their accommodation, carefully adapted from its simplicity and plainness to the level of their capacities. Such instruction should be given not only on the Sabbath, and at the usual place of worship for the whites, but also as often as practicable on week days, and on the plantations where the slaves labor. The better to effect this great object, it is recommended to all our Churches to yield to the negroes, and for their special benefit, a definite portion, say one-fourth of their minister's time.

"5. That we highly approve the measure that has been so successfully adopted in some of our sister and neighboring States, of the formation of associations of planters and slave owners, for the employment and maintainance of discreet and devoted ministers, as missionaries to the blacks, who, under the patronage of the Association, labor among the negroes on the plantations, preaching the gospel to them at suitable points, visiting the negroes at their quarters and in their cabins, and catechising their children with all pastoral fidelity, tenderness and care. Such Associations we deem eminently judicious, safe, and productive of good to all classes; nor can we forbear the expression of our hope, that ere long such Associations will be formed and successfully operating throughout the planting districts of south Alabama.

"6. That the Presbyteries under the care of this Synod, be directed to urge upon every Session and every minister subject to their jurisdiction, immediate and earnest attention to this subject, and o the

plan herein proposed ; and that they require at every meeting of the Presbytery a full statement from each Session of the degree of attention given to this subject, and the steps actually taken for the benefit of the blacks, and that a minute account be rendered to the Synod on this subject every year.

“7. That each minister and the Session of each vacant church be directed to have these resolutions read from the pulpit on the first Sabbath in January next, or as soon thereafter as practicable, with suitable admonition as to the importance of discharging our duty to the colored population.”

In 1832 the Synod of Virginia adopted, after mature and careful deliberation, an overture from the Presbytery of East Hanover, relative to the licensure of laymen to give religious instruction to the colored population. The plan proposed by this overture is presented in the following resolutions, viz.:

“1. *Resolved*, That any Church Session within our bounds be, and they hereby are authorized to appoint any suitable persons, either officers or members, to conduct religious worship for the benefit of slaves or other colored persons, and to communicate instruction in any way which the constitution of our Church and the laws of the land do not forbid.

“*And be it further resolved*, That when any Session determines to license and appoint any person as above provided, that they do it in the following form, viz.:

“The Session of the Presbyterian Church of

——, do hereby authorize and license you, A. B., to hold religious meetings and give religious instruction orally, as a layman, to slaves and other people of color, wherever God in his providence may call you, and so long as you continue a regular member of this Church, or until it may seem expedient to the Session to recall this authority.

“Resolved, That the ministers, ruling elders, and members of said churches be earnestly enjoined to invite such of their brethren as they may judge to possess the requisite gifts and graces, solemnly and prayerfully to consider whether it is not their duty to engage in this important work.

“Resolved, That the ministers and Sessions of our churches be requested to give to the persons licensed under this system, all the aid and encouragement in their power, by faithful and affectionate counsel and warning, and by all other suitable methods; and that all the members of the churches under the care of this Presbytery be, and they hereby are, affectionately urged to bear continually these teachers and their labors before the throne of grace, and in an especial manner so to do at the monthly concert of prayer, and on the first Monday of January, 1833; and to use such other measures as they may believe will be calculated to extend their influence over the colored people, and promote their usefulness in their work.”

After the experience of two years, in 1834, the Synod

“Resolved, That it be earnestly recommended to the ministers and Church Sessions throughout

the bounds of this Synod, to increase their efforts for the salvation of our colored population; and especially that the resolution passed at a former meeting of this body, authorizing church Sessions to license laymen to give oral religious instructions to this class of our population, be attended to whenever the resident minister cannot fully perform that important duty."

The scheme thus adopted and commended, we are assured, seemed to be working well; but through the deep feeling excited in Virginia by the ultra abolition movements at the north, it had to be abandoned. But its abandonment did not cause all efforts on the behalf of the slaves to cease, for in November, 1836, the following resolution was adopted, viz.:

"Resolved, That this Synod once more commend to the churches under its care, the subject of the religious instruction of the colored population within our bounds; and we especially exhort ministers, elders, and heads of families to renewed exertion, in all lawful and proper ways for the spiritual benefit of this class of our people."

Again, October 21st, 1844, the Synod took the following action on the subject:

"The committee to whom was referred the subject of the instruction of the colored people presented the following report, which was adopted, viz.:

"That, regarding the religious instruction of our colored population, in the language of a reverend father in another Synod, as the most important

missionary work devolving on the Church in the south, they humbly conceive that it is the duty of this Synod—a duty which they cannot neglect without being guilty of a great sin—to take immediate and decisive action on the subject. They would, therefore, recommend to the Synod the adoption of the following resolutions:

“1. *Resolved*, That it be recommended to all the ministers belonging to this Synod, to preach to the colored people specially and statedly, as far as practicable.

“2. *Resolved*, That Synod would recommend, wherever it may be practicable, the establishment of Sabbath schools for the oral instruction of the colored people.

“3. *Resolved*, That it be recommended to the members of the churches within our bounds to adopt, wherever it may be necessary, some systematic mode for the religious instruction of the servants in their families.

“4. *Resolved*, That the several Presbyteries belonging to this Synod, be required to take the supervision of this whole matter, and require the several churches under their care to report annually to them on the subject, and that they make annual reports to the Synod.”

The foregoing plan for providing instructors and instruction for the slaves, although abandoned, is given here for the purpose of showing the pressing demand there is for efforts in this field, the spirit of the members of the Synod in reference to it, and the withering influence of the ultraism of the north

upon the labors of the Church on behalf of the slaves, and consequently upon their highest interests.

The Synod of North Carolina appointed a committee, in 1846, to report on the subject of the religious instruction of the slaves. That committee reported, in 1847, and their report was adopted, and is as follows :

“The committee appointed at the last stated session of the Synod to inquire into the moral condition of the colored population within our bounds, and to report such measures as ought to be adopted to provide more effectually for their religious instruction; beg leave to submit the following remarks and resolutions as their report; viz.:

“A late writer on this subject has observed that ‘the national mind is beginning to look earnestly at the *political aspect* of the slavery question, the *religious mind* at the *moral aspect*, and the southern mind at the social and economical aspect.’

“Whilst we believe the above statement of Dr. Durbin, as a matter of fact, to be substantially true, we doubt whether the evangelical mind of this Synod, or of a large part of the christian world, is properly awake to the moral necessities of the colored race, or to the obligations which christianity imposes in their behalf. This, too, we are constrained to fear, is emphatically true of the evangelical mind touching the colored population of this country.

“How much soever men may perplex and vex themselves and others about the slavery question in

its various political, moral, social, and economical aspects, or differ in opinion in regard to the civil relation of our colored population, there are important aspects of this great and delicate subject in which (it may be assumed) all good and wise men are cordially agreed.

“1. Our colored population, whether bond or free, are, equally with any classes of society, the accountable, moral agents of the great Creator, Preserver and Proprietor of mankind; and as such, are destined to live forever with the ransomed in heaven, or to lie down with the lost spirits in everlasting burnings. It is a gross slander to charge southern christians, as they have sometimes been charged, with regarding and treating their slaves ‘as beasts of burden;’ or, at least, as ‘mere hewers of wood and drawers of water.’ They should be, and in fact by southern christians, are regarded and treated as the immortal and accountable creatures of God, as truly as their masters are, hastening with them to the same tribunal, to render a strict account and to receive a righteous retribution.

“2. Our servants are part and parcel with our children, of our household, strictly and emphatically minor members of our families, and so regarded both by the civil and moral law. Hence the laws of the country hold the heads of families bound to feed and clothe, to treat humanely, to protect and defend, both children and servants; thus making them both minors—the one class through life, the other until they arrive at a certain age.

The term 'household,' in Scripture, too, though variously used, is often so employed as to include, with the children, the *servants* of the house, whether bond or hired. Hence, 'household servants' we find to be a scripture phrase. The term 'servant,' moreover, is very frequently, if not generally, so used as necessarily to imply this relation. In the fourth commandment they, as well as the sons and daughters, are especially enumerated in the prohibition. Thus not only does the whole frame work of society, with the universal operation of social and domestic ties, but also the genius and spirit of the Bible, with all its implications touching the subject, bear us out in the conclusion that our servants are minors, members of our households, bearing a relation to their masters in many respects similar to that which children bear to their parents. Hence,

"3. We infer that there is a solemn obligation resting upon masters to care and provide for their servants, to say the least, as binding as that to provide for their children. Nor is this obligation confined to the feeding and clothing of them, to the promotion of their domestic comforts, or the protection of them in their civil rights. It extends to their spiritual and immortal interests. There is evidently in nature, in the moral sense of mankind, as well as in an enlightened reason, something that concedes to the position here taken. And especially does this feeling develope itself when christianity exerts its legitimate influence. Children and servants are alike dependent and subject to author-

ity. They are, therefore, in like manner, to be cared and provided for, especially in regard to the interests of the soul. Yea, more. As the servant is a minor for life, and his time under the control of his master, it is the dictate of common sense, as well as of the Bible, that there is a special and most solemn obligation resting upon his master to provide for his religious instruction. If this be not true, who is to provide for it? Their condition, on this supposition, is worse than that of the heathen. For if there be no obligation on their masters to provide for them, then it will follow that they are left, in the arrangements of the divine government, entirely unprovided for—placed not only out of, but even beyond the reach of, the means of salvation; a conclusion not to be entertained for a moment.

“4. It may fairly be assumed, moreover, that if the foregoing position be tenable, the judicatories of the Church are bound to look after the spiritual interests and welfare of our colored population, with as much care and diligence as they do after those of any other classes of the community. Most obviously we should be *more* concerned for them than for the distant heathen; because they are in the midst of us and dependent upon us. We reap the fruit of their labor in common with their masters, and if *we* do not care and provide for them, no other christian organization will. Indeed, as that class of people generally, with very few and rare exceptions, are more ignorant, have less capacity, have fewer facilities and opportuni-

ties, and are more liable to error, and more exposed to temptation, they should claim more of our sympathy and effort. The judicatories of the Church, therefore, as other portions of the community, have weighty obligations resting upon them in regard to what have been called 'our domestic heathen.' They should carefully look after and facilitate, not only the religious instruction of the people in general, and of the children of the Church in particular, but also and especially of the colored population in their respective bounds. At any rate, they should see that the colored population of their own congregations are instructed in the principles and doctrines of christianity."

The report adopted by the Synod, presents here a detailed examination of statistics, to furnish which would unduly swell the number of these pages. The result to which this examination leads, is, that while neither the Synod nor other denominations are doing all that they might and ought to do for the religious instruction of the people of color, yet, taking the whole population, the number taught, and the proportion who are communicants in the Church are about as great as in many other portions of the community where slavery does not exist. The report proceeds:

"Nor has the correspondence of your committee with the Presbyteries, furnished the materials for drawing a view of this subject materially different from that which is now presented. No presbyterial action, it is believed, has been had in either of the Presbyteries of Orange or Concord, except in

the latter to refer the subject to a committee to report next spring. In most of the houses of worship in these Presbyteries, as well as in that of Fayetteville, places are appropriated for the colored people, sufficient, perhaps, to accommodate all who attend. If these appropriations were more spacious, and especially if the colored people received more frequent, direct, and appropriate attention, it is believed that their attendance would be much more numerous, constant, and profitable. In some of the churches there are weekly Sabbath schools held for the oral instruction of the colored portion of the congregation; and in these, as well as in many christian families, Dr. Jones' Catechism is successfully used. Most of our ministers preach more or less frequently, by special appointment, to the colored people. On such occasions the attendance is much more numerous, and the attention is much more encouraging. The committee are gratified to be able also to state, that the Presbytery of Fayetteville is reported to have taken special action, and to be actively and successfully engaged in behalf of their colored population. That Presbytery has taken the ground that the colored people constitute a constituent part of the respective congregations within the bounds of which they live, and are to receive a proportionable part of the pastoral and ministerial labor. In that Presbytery, also, Sabbath schools and Bible and Catechetical classes are attended by many of the ministers, ruling elders, and private christians, at the church, at their own homes, and, in several instances, in

houses erected for the special benefit of the colored people. That Presbytery, moreover, requires their ministers and church Sessions to present a minute report, at each semi-annual meeting, of their labors and success among their people of color. It ought further to be stated, that that Presbytery has made several abortive efforts, and are still desirous to obtain the services of a missionary exclusively for the benefit of the negroes within their bounds.

“Whilst the moral character and deportment of those colored people who are members of our churches, or who attend regularly upon the means of grace, are quite as good, in proportion to their knowledge and opportunities, as those of the white people, it is humiliating to know that the reverse is true of those that are neither members of the Church nor hearers of the gospel. This fact should stimulate us to the adoption of such means for their benefit as will place them under the transforming influence of the gospel of Christ.

“With the view of calling a more general and special attention to this subject, and for the purpose of having the spiritual interests of our colored people more fully and more extensively understood, as well as more adequately and more effectually attended to, your committee respectfully recommend the following resolutions for the adoption of the Synod, viz.:

“1. That the Synod of North Carolina feels a deep solicitude for the moral and spiritual interests of her colored population, believing that they demand the special attention of the higher judicato-

ries, as well as of the pastors and Sessions of our churches.

“2. That the Presbyteries under the care of this Synod be directed to pay *very special* attention to this subject; to call the attention of all the churches and pastors under their care particularly to it; to see, as far as practicable, that adequate and comfortable accommodations be furnished to them in the sanctuary; and that the gospel be preached to them, as to the poor for whom the gospel was provided; and to enjoin it upon christian families to do all they can to cause them to sanctify the Sabbath, attend the sanctuary, and to have them otherwise thoroughly instructed in the principles of revealed religion.

“3. That it be earnestly recommended to the Presbyteries to employ, each, as soon as practicable, a missionary of undoubted qualifications to devote himself exclusively to this department of labor, within their respective bounds, and to report faithfully his plans and their results at each semi-annual meeting.”

The following are the resolutions and plans of effort on behalf of the slaves adopted by some of the southern Presbyteries:

The Presbytery of Lexington, of the Synod of Kentucky, some years since, adopted the following resolutions. They indicate both their sense of duty and their method of laboring for the benefit of the slaves:

“*Resolved*, 1st, That all our pastors and stated supplies, should consider the servants of the house-

holds belonging to their respective charges, who are not members of other churches, as being justly entitled to a share of their pastoral care, in the same manner as the children of the household are; and that they should adapt their ordinary discourses to their capacities, and as often as they think expedient preach to them separately, and by special appointment.

“2. As the word of God clearly recognizes the relation of master and servant at a time when servants were mostly slaves, and enjoins upon them the duties which they respectively owe to each other; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That pastors should carefully inculcate upon masters and servants their relative duties, and teach them what are the proper effects which the gospel, when cordially embraced, will necessarily produce in their hearts and lives respectively, in regard to this relation.

“3. That the Sessions be enjoined to establish Sabbath schools for the oral instruction of the colored people in every congregation where it is practicable, to be superintended and taught by themselves or some pious members of the Church, and that masters and mistresses should take a lively interest in the subject, and give it efficient aid and encouragement by requiring their servants to attend, and by their hearty concurrence in the object sought to be attained in those schools; and by showing their servants at home that they earnestly desire their spiritual welfare. Without the hearty co-operation of masters and mistresses, pastors and Ses-

sions will be able to accomplish but little in giving the gospel to servants.

“4. That pastors be careful to enforce on pious masters and mistresses that they are solemnly bound to use their best endeavors to teach the gospel to their servants, both by their relation to them as members of their families, and by the authority of God as revealed in his word ; not only instruction, advice, and admonition, but even authority may be necessary, that the Sabbath may be observed and the house of God attended ; and that our servants may hear the gospel and be instructed in the Sabbath schools, and thus be brought to salvation through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; and every effort should be accompanied with prayer to God that he would make the instructions given effectual to salvation.

“5. That our colored people be taught the sacredness and perpetuity of the marriage relation ; and it is further recommended that proper efforts should be made to have the rites of matrimony celebrated in all cases among them with due solemnity, and in accordance with the word of God.

“6. That the roll be called at every autumnal meeting of the Presbytery, to ascertain the diligence of our ministers and Sessions in reference to the duties specified in the preceding resolutions.”

The Presbytery of Western District of the Synod of Mississippi, at its spring session in 1850, adopted the following resolution on this subject, viz.:

“Resolved, That we, as a Presbytery, will endeavor prayerfully to observe the injunction of the General Assembly to instruct the slaves in our bounds; and that the Session of each church under our care be enjoined to see servants carefully instructed in the great principles of the gospel, at home and in the churches, so far as practicable, and report their diligence herein at each spring meeting of Presbytery.”

The following plan of labor on the behalf of the slaves, was adopted some time since by the Presbytery of Georgia, of the Synod of Georgia:

“It is a principle not to be called in question, that when pastors are settled over churches in our country, they are settled over all the different classes and conditions of men who compose those churches.

“Servants form a component part of all our churches. They as naturally and properly worship with their owners as children with their parents; and it would be as inconsistent for pastors to neglect the children as the servants of the households over which they are called to preside. They are as responsible for the one class as for the other. This is the view which the word of God authorizes us to take; for we discover Paul, in his epistles to the churches which he himself planted, and to which he personally ministered, including servants in those churches; and, along with masters, he gives them, as part of his charge, instruction and exhortations suitable to their circumstances and condition in life.

“And we find that as he gives Timothy commandment touching all classes of persons embraced in the churches, so he does not overlook the servants. He commands him to exhort and instruct them, and thereby teaches him to include them in his pastoral charge. We thus have example and precept from the holy apostle. It is not necessary for us to enlarge our proofs. The principle is settled by the word of God.

“In fulfilling our duties, therefore, as pastors, we should adopt something like the following plan:

“1. *Preaching.* On the Sabbath: That our sermons to the united congregations be so framed as to be as appreciable and as intelligible to both classes as possible; and that the minister take special notice of the negroes in his preaching, and sometimes make a direct address to them; that he devote the Sabbath afternoon or evening to preaching to the negroes; and should this be impossible, that he deliver a lecture to them some evening in the week.

“During the week: That pastors, as frequently and as extensively as possible, visit their people and preach to the negroes on the plantations at night, taking special notice of the members of the church and of the children in the way of speaking to them, if it be but for a few moments only.

“2. *Sabbath Schools.*

“That pastors establish colored Sabbath schools in their churches for children and adults, with a superintendent and a sufficient number of teachers;

and that the time for the meeting of the school be so fixed as to be most convenient for the people, either between services or in the afternoon. That from time to time they visit and catechise the schools, and give encouragement to teachers; and endeavor to interest owners in the schools, so far as to have their children in regular attendance from Sabbath to Sabbath.

“3. Inquiry meetings.

“That pastors hold inquiry meetings for the negroes, and keep a list of all persons coming for instruction, as well as of excommunicated and suspended members who wish to be restored to the Church. That these inquiry meetings be appointed at such times and places—say, for example, on the Sabbath, and at the house of God—as may best suit the convenience of the people; and let them secure the assistance in this work of elders and prominent members of their churches.

“4. Committees of instruction.

“In large congregations of negroes spread over a considerable extent of country, pastors, in order to meet the wants of the people, may appoint different elders and members residing in different parts of the bounds of the congregation to act as a committee of instruction, for all who wish for instruction, in order to church membership; and that all who present themselves for admission before the church Session, be required to bring a recommendation to that effect from some member of the committee.

“5. Watchmen.

“That whenever it is necessary to appoint a colored preacher and watchman, pastors become well acquainted with them, and frequently assemble them with their elders, and inquire into the state of religion on the respective plantations on which they are appointed to watch; and give them instruction, and pray with and exhort them to a faithful discharge of duty.

“6. Church meetings.

“That occasionally pastors call a general meeting of all the colored members of their churches, for the purpose of becoming personally acquainted with them, of inquiring into their conduct as christians, and giving them suitable warnings and exhortations. Immediately preceding every communion season would be a favorable time for holding these meetings.

“7. Children baptised and catechised.

“That pastors carefully baptise the infant children of colored members; first instructing the parents in the nature and duties of the rite; and that they keep a register of the names of baptised children. And that they once in two or three months collect all the baptised children and youth, and all others that may belong to the congregation, in the church, and there, in the presence of the owners and all others, catechise and instruct them, giving due notice of the day, and requesting all owners to see that their negro children appear clean and neat, and prepared on the lessons.

“8. Church discipline.

“That pastors, with the Church Sessions, attend

carefully and punctually to the cases of discipline brought before them; and as soon as practicable after they are reported, that there be no delay.

“9. Weddings and funerals.

“That pastors use every influence to impress the people with the sacredness and value of the marriage relation; and require all church members to be regularly married themselves, and to have their children regularly married also; and that pastors hold themselves ready to wait on them, and perform their marriage ceremonies at all times. And, moreover, that pastors look well to the poor and the aged and the infirm of their churches, and see that they receive assistance from the church, if it be needed; and be ready to attend funerals, and bury their dead, and sympathise with them in all their trials and afflictions.

“10. Overseers and elders.

“That pastors endeavor to impress upon owners, masters and mistresses, the duty of affording their people some religious instruction on their plantations, in the way of Sabbath schools or evening prayers, especially if they be members of the church; and that they endeavor to influence the elders to be active in this field of labor.”

In 1846 the Presbytery of Harmony, of the Synod of South Carolina, adopted the following paper, viz.:

“It is our deliberate opinion, that the religious wants of our colored population are not met by the mode of instruction at present pursued by our ministers. They stand in need of something more

than the occasional instruction afforded them from the pulpit by the pastors; they need catechetical instruction in the elementary truths of our holy religion. They are generally unable to read, and, therefore, this instruction must be oral. They think that the Church has not done her duty to them in the matter of affording them comfortable houses in which to worship; and, therefore, in order to a fuller discharge of duty in these particulars, the Presbytery adopt the following resolutions:

“1. That this Presbytery sincerely and heartily deplore before our long-suffering and merciful God, our past unfaithfulness to this solemn trust, and humbly ask forgiveness in the name of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

“2. That, by the grace of God helping us, we will endeavor from this time to cultivate more faithfully this long neglected but most interesting field.

“3. That, in order to prepare the way for more efficient labor than can be performed under our present mode of operation, we adopt the following plan, viz.:

“That the whole Presbytery be divided into seven districts—[each district embraced from two to five contiguous churches.] And further, that these districts be visited by the following committees. [Each committee embraced two or three ministers.] The several committees are directed to visit as soon as possible their respective districts, and from the pulpit, and from house to house, bring

this important matter before the minds of the members of the churches, and others interested, and endeavor to persuade them to erect suitable houses in which the colored people may assemble for catechetical instruction and the preaching of the gospel. The committees are also directed to ascertain whether the churches or individual members may be induced to contribute of their substance for the support of the missionaries who may give their entire labors to this class of our population. And if these desirable objects cannot be attained, the committees are directed to urge upon all the churches the duty of allowing their pastors to devote at least half of their time to the colored people.”

There has existed, for the last sixteen years, in Liberty county, Georgia, a missionary association, embracing different denominations, whose special object is to labor for the salvation of the slaves. That the labors of this association have been blessed of God, is manifest from the fact that, in 1846, in a negro population of 4212, the number of church members was 1139, more than one-fourth of the whole, and a large majority of all the adults. In these labors Presbyterians have taken a deep interest and a prominent part. Rev. C. C. Jones, D. D., was for many years the devoted and successful missionary of the Association. Other ministers of our Church have also participated in these efforts.

Such are some of the plans of labor on the behalf of the slaves adopted by a portion of the Synods and Presbyteries in the south. To furnish the ac-

tion of all the southern judicatories would unduly increase the size of this volume. These are abundantly sufficient to show the light in which southern Presbyterians view the whole subject of slavery, and their own obligations to labor for the salvation of the slaves. They also exhibit the fact that this sense of obligation is rapidly deepening and strengthening. Most of them have been adopted within the last ten or fifteen years, and are only just beginning to come into successful operation, and bear the fruits of salvation.

In carrying out these plans, and accomplishing the good purpose for which they were adopted, various forms of effort, bearing both upon the temporal and eternal welfare of the slaves, have been resorted to by southern christians. Nor is this work left to southern christians. The whole Presbyterian Church, under the direction of the General Assembly, and through the Board of Missions, is engaged in urging forward this work of evangelizing the slaves of the south. This is a statement which, it is believed, cannot be made of any other denominations of christians in this country. The Methodist Episcopal and the Baptist churches, the most numerous by far at the south, have recently been divided into northern and southern portions, and neither of them act as a whole in this work. The Associate Reformed Church exists in separate Synods, having but little intercourse with each other. And the Synods of the north do not co-operate with that of the south in any general plan of effort on behalf of the slaves. The Asso-

ate and the Reformed Presbyterian churches have almost entirely withdrawn from the south, and neither of them has any plan of labor enlisting the entire body on behalf of the colored race in this country. The dioceses of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the south, are laboring with laudable zeal for the salvation of the slaves. But no arrangements exist in that body, it is believed, by which the Church, as a whole, is engaged in the work of giving them the gospel. And many of those who most bitterly denounce the Presbyterian Church for her course on this subject, as some of the Congregational associations of the east, and the self styled American Free Church, to say nothing of abolition associations, contribute scarce a dollar, and put forth scarce any effort, in a direct form, for the salvation of the slaves. But amid the disunion of some, the apathy of others, and the fanatical denunciation of still others, the Presbyterian Church stands alone, engaged as a whole unitedly, in laboring to rescue from spiritual bondage and eternal woe the slaves of the south; leaving God, in his wonder working providence, to remove the bonds of temporal slavery, which she cannot knock off. She is pursuing, and fixed in her resolve to pursue, this work, let others do what they will and say what they may, as fast as the men and the means at her command will enable her.

In pursuing this work she uses the ordinary means which God has appointed, and is wont to bless, for the salvation of men. Among these stands first,

The preaching of the gospel.

The Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church employs, at the present time, several missionaries who preach exclusively to the colored people, and expend all their energies in labors for their salvation. These labor in different parts of the south. And nearly, if not quite, all the missionaries employed by the Board in the slave States, give a greater or less portion of their time and energies to the instruction of the slaves.

In the Synod of Mississippi the pastors and stated supplies, and some professors and officers of Colleges and Academies, give a portion of their labors to the people of color. As far as public preaching is concerned, they give as much of their efforts to the slaves as to the whites. Slaves are permitted and encouraged to attend, on Sabbath morning with their masters; and a special service is generally held for them in the afternoon. Some of the ministers preach on two plantations on Sabbath afternoon, as often as the weather will permit.

In portions of this Synod, the religious education of the slaves has been, for a long time, a matter of the deepest interest. The great field for preaching the gospel in this country at present, is the black population. The door also is open, and the call to enter it is loud. Upon most of the larger plantations belonging to Presbyterians in the bounds of this Synod, chapels have been erected, and chaplains employed to preach, not only on the Sabbath, but occasionally in the week. Four min-

isters are employed in the Presbytery of Mississippi, within the bounds of this Synod, to labor exclusively for the slaves. The same number are, in like manner, employed in the Presbytery of Louisiana.

In the Synod of Kentucky, while few if any of the ministers labor exclusively for the slaves, all of them preach more or less to them, either separately or in the same congregation with the whites, the church buildings being constructed with a view to their spiritual instruction.

In the Synod of Nashville, embracing the State of Tennessee, all the ministers preach especially to the colored people once every Sabbath, or as often as they preach to the whites. Some of them preach to two or three congregations; and wherever they preach, they give a part of their services to them. And one of the members of the Presbytery of Western District, gives his entire time and energies to the instruction of the slaves.

Nearly all the pastors of the Synod of Virginia preach to the slaves on the afternoon of almost every Sabbath, especially in the summer. Others preach frequently to them, but not statedly.

In the Synod of North Carolina, as every house of worship has a part of it appropriated to the colored people, they have the benefit of the same instruction that the white people enjoy, and at the same time. But besides this, most of the pastors give them one service on the Sabbath exclusively, at which the white people may attend if they choose.

A goodly number of the ministers of the Synod of Georgia preach more or less especially among the slaves. They give them one particular service every Sabbath, generally in the afternoon, whilst the slaves have also the opportunity of hearing the sermons that are preached to the white congregations. Some of the ministers have weekly meetings with the negroes. In some cases owners of plantations unite and employ a circuit rider who makes his appointments from plantation to plantation.

In addition to those already referred to, there are a number of ministers in different Presbyteries who labor exclusively for the benefit of the slaves. But it is needless to multiply specific statements on this subject. From what has been presented it is apparent that whilst a number—from fifteen to eighteen—Presbyterian ministers at the south, give all their time to the instruction of the slaves, eight-tenths of all give a greater or less portion of their time and energies to the same work; and one-third of them employ half their time for the promotion of the same noble end. Thus the poor have the gospel preached to them as fully, perhaps, as is practicable, in view of the field and the men and means possessed by the Church for its occupation. Church buildings have also been erected in many of the cities of the south for the exclusive use of the slaves, where the gospel is regularly dispensed to them; the congregation in such cases being regarded as a part of the church erecting the house, and under the care of its officers. And the way is

fully open for the indefinite multiplication of such houses of worship, and the preaching of the gospel to all the millions of the slaves. The demand for ministers who shall labor exclusively for the people of color, is constantly much greater than can possibly be supplied. As rapidly, then, as the Church can furnish the men and the means, may this work advance. A wider door is not open, and a louder call is scarce heard from any part of the earth, than comes up from these sons of Africa, in our southern country. When shall they learn fully of Him who has power on earth to forgive sins?

Sabbath schools, &c.

But the direct preaching of the gospel is not the only means used for the salvation of the slaves. Sabbath school, Bible class, and catechetical instruction is also extensively given. The Synod of Mississippi have published two Catechisms for the use of slaves, the one historical, the other doctrinal. In many congregations, and on many plantations in this Synod there are Sabbath schools and Bible classes for the slaves. C. C. Jones, D. D., of Georgia, has also published a Catechism which is extensively used in the instruction of slaves. And in the Synod of Georgia, there are a large number of numerously attended and interesting Sabbath schools among the blacks. We are assured that in the Synod of North Carolina, most of the pastors hold Bible classes, using generally Dr. Jones' Catechism, instructing the slaves orally. There are also regularly organized Sabbath schools in a great many churches, in which they are taught

in the same way, books being used by the teachers adapted to their age and advancement. Religious instruction is extensively given in the same way in the Synod of Alabama. And, indeed, throughout the whole southern Presbyterian Church, much and increasing attention is given to the organization and maintenance of Sabbath schools and Bible classes, for the instruction of both adult slaves and their children. And the multiplication of these means of grace, and their extension to those that are still destitute, is one great object which the Church has constantly before it. Tens of thousands thus enjoy the means of instruction in the plan of salvation, and the number is annually increasing.

In addition to these more public means of salvation employed by the Church on behalf of the slaves, many families are careful in giving them religious instruction at home, and in bringing them under the influence of the domestic means of grace. On this subject we have the following testimony from J. W. Alexander, D. D., a most competent witness. It is found in his "Thoughts on Family Worship":

"For however the ignorant and unjust clamors of some may reiterate the contrary, we speak what we do know, and testify that we have seen, in asserting that pious householders at the south are accustomed to exert a direct religious influence on their servants. The master of numerous slaves has an access to them, and an influence over them, in regard to divine truth, such as no other man on earth has over an equal number of persons. That

this influence is exerted always to the extent of the obligation, we no more assert than we assert the same of teachers, ship-masters, and owners of factories in New England or Europe. But that the way is open to an extraordinary extent, and that the effort is conscientiously made in a large number of blessed instances, we not only believe but do testify."

The following is the testimony of prominent ministers of the Presbyterian Church, residing in different southern Synods, on this subject:

"I do not know a slave-holder, who is a member of our Church, who does not in some degree give religious instruction to his slaves; all of them desire it. Many of our members think that the true interpretation of 1 Tim. 5: 8, 'If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel,' relates to the giving of the gospel to their servants."

"In all Presbyterian families which I know, the slaves join in family worship, more or less, and in the religious services and teachings of the Sabbath; and in many cases are directly instructed in religion."

"In many private families the religious instruction of the slaves is a matter of pains-taking and laborious attention. My own servants can read as well as I can; and by the instruction given them by the white members of the family, some of them have committed to memory the whole of Jones' Catechism, containing probably a thousand questions,

besides many chapters in the Bible, and a large number of Watt's psalms and hymns. And similar instances, I think, are by no means uncommon."

"Many of their masters also give them religious instruction at home, to which duty they are continually exhorted from our pulpits."

"In every christian family, the household servants attend family worship as particularly as the children do, and are catechised by the master or mistress and answer their questions from Brown's or the Assembly's shorter Catechism in turn, as the other members of the family do. In country places, where the population is small, and christian families do not enjoy the means of grace every Sabbath, it is very customary—much more so than otherwise—for the master to attend the church with all his slaves and the white family, and after the exercises of the Bible class and Sabbath school are over, to conduct public worship in the usual way, reading a sermon from Burder or Davies or some other author whose style is simple and striking."

These extracts are sufficient to show that the slaves of Presbyterian masters have generally access to all the private and domestic means of instruction and grace which are usually enjoyed in pious households. That this is universally true, is not and cannot be asserted. But that the interest, in the southern part of the Church, in reference to the salvation of the slaves, is rapidly deepening and strengthening; and that the public and private means of grace are being extended to increasing numbers of them annually, are delightful facts

which stand out prominently in the aspect of the Church. These facts are big with the promise of future blessings. And to the indefinite multiplication of these efforts there is no let, save the apathy of the people of God, and the consequent want of means and men.

Another form in which Presbyterians have manifested their regard for the slaves is, the encouragement of colonization upon the coast of Africa. The General Assembly have repeatedly recommended this scheme to the patronage of the Church. And Presbyterians in all parts of the land have been, from its earliest history, its fast friends. This last remark holds true especially of southern Presbyterians. One of their number who stands high declares, "we are all colonizationists. A Presbyterian who is not a sincere friend to Liberia and all its interests, I should look upon as out of his place. I do not know such an one personally." Another declares, "I have long had great confidence in the scheme of African colonization; not that of itself it can accomplish all that we desire, but it will do great good, and especially will it hold public attention to the subject, and encourage emancipation, until God in his providence shall lead to some plan by which universal emancipation will take place in a way consistent with the best interest of both masters and servants."

With such sentiments as these southern Presbyterians have patronized the Colonization Society. They have given tens of thousands of dollars for the promotion of its objects. And this scheme is

no longer of dubious character or questionable utility. It has afforded an opportunity to many christian masters to emancipate their slaves with a rational prospect of promoting their interest. It has furnished a home where the African can enjoy real freedom, and where every obstacle in the way of his elevation in intelligence and virtue, as well as in worldly prosperity, is removed. It has furnished, and will, to a still greater extent, furnish, facilities for the introduction of the gospel, its civilization, and its salvation, among the benighted tribes of that dark continent. And it now promises to be the only effectual means of breaking up finally the inhuman slave trade upon the African coast, and of providing a home for the oppressed man of color from all countries, and possibly an ultimate receptacle for the emancipated millions of American slaves. The patrons of this scheme, therefore, are shown, both by its immediate, and especially its prospective blessings to the people of color, to be true philanthropists and lovers of that unhappy race. A prominent part in this noble scheme of benevolence has been borne by members of the Presbyterian Church.

Now it must be obvious to every careful reader of the Bible, that these modes of effort on behalf of the slaves are precisely, with the exception of this last, such as were used by the Apostles and primitive christians. Instead of denouncing the simple relation of master and slave, and refusing to have anything to do with masters until they emancipated their slaves, they preached the un-

searchable riches of Christ to both, received both to the fellowship of the Church, taught them in the most effective way, and led them to rejoice in the fact that they were brethren in the Lord; thus producing mutual sympathy, affection, and concern for each other's highest interests. They laid down great principles on the subject of man's duty to man. And by avoiding the unnecessary excitement of wrong passions, which would have resulted then as it does now, from the denunciation of a relation which may exist without guilt; and by securing the predominance of right feeling, and the influence of divine truth, they most effectually undermined and destroyed the whole system of slavery then existing. For it is a fact that under these influences Roman slavery gradually, peacefully, safely, and finally melted away. By this course they secured the salvation of the souls of both masters and slaves, the noblest end to which the labors of man can possibly be directed; and at the same time promoted the final abolition of the system more effectively than they could by any other means. In refusing to denounce the mere relation, and in going to both masters and slaves with the gospel of the grace of God, striving to secure their salvation, leading them to feel as brethren toward each other, and teaching them the great truths of the gospel in regard to their personal and mutual obligations, the Presbyterian Church, therefore, follows apostolic example.

But this course is not only scriptural, but manifestly philosophic, even if the emancipation of the

slave be the object primarily aimed at. Denunciation, especially in reference to a matter the wrong of which is dependent upon circumstances, and not perfectly obvious, is adapted to produce bitter feeling, arouse the worst passions, excite obstinate resistance, and lead to efforts at self-justification. In this state of mind conviction is almost impossible. And even when conviction is produced, right feeling can hardly be awakened. Denunciation of men merely on the account of slave-holding, produces a state of mind the farthest possible from being favorable to efforts either for the emancipation or salvation of the slave. It rivets tighter his bonds, and renders more permanent his enslavement. But on the other hand, let the gospel in plainness and kindness be preached to both master and slave. As soon as its truths take hold upon their hearts, right feelings toward each other, toward all men, and toward God, take possession of them. Right views of their relations and responsibilities begin to fill their minds. Their consciences become susceptible of strong convictions of truth and duty. The spirit of oppression on the one part, and of disobedience and dishonesty on the other, dies out. A mutual recognition of common brotherhood takes place. A mutual sympathy and affection for each other spring up. Each begins to recognize and respect the feelings and the rights of the other. Each labors for the promotion of the other's interests. And as the master is the stronger, the more favored and the more responsible party, he feels his obligations to the slave, and strives to discharge them.

And as he proceeds in his efforts for the good of the slave, his heart becomes more interested. And whilst his mind comes more completely under the influence of the expansive benevolence of the gospel, and the slave, by his christian conduct, wins more upon his affections, he feels that nothing short of entire emancipation can satisfy him. And having done this, he is prepared to urge the final abolition of the whole system. Sound reason, then, as well as apostolic example, shows that the course pursued by the Presbyterian Church is right and wise, not only as it tends to secure the most important end first, but also as it is most beautifully adapted to bring about, peacefully and safely to all parties, the final abolition of the whole system of slavery.

But it is of deep interest to inquire, whether the actual results of the course pursued by the Church, prove the truth of these remarks. Theories may seem very plausible, and yet in application prove utterly at fault. The tendency of any particular course of conduct, is manifested by its actual results. What, then, are the effects which have flowed from the labors of the Church on behalf of the slaves?

1. How many have been led to emancipate their slaves through her influence directly, or through the efforts of the Colonization Society, which her members have patronized, we have no means of ascertaining. Nothing is hazarded, however, in asserting that many have been induced to do so. And the attention of multitudes has been directed to this

subject, and they have been prepared in heart, and led to prepare their slaves for emancipation, whenever God in his providence shall open the way for it with safety to the master and advantage to the slave. This is evident from the strong opposition to the system, and desire for its removal almost uniformly expressed by Presbyterians of the south. It is testified of the Presbyterians of Louisiana, that they generally feel opposed to slavery and desire its removal. Of the members of our Church in Virginia we are assured that they regard it as a great evil, which none feel more deeply, or more sincerely deplore, than those who are in the midst of it and see and feel its evils. The recent political struggle in Kentucky evinced the strong opposition of an immense majority of the Presbyterians of that State to the system, and their desire for its removal. Very similar is the feeling of those who reside in Tennessee. In a word, we are authorized to affirm that Presbyterians generally at the south, feel opposed to slavery, deplore its existence, and would rejoice in its extinction. There is, therefore, on the part of the members of the Church, a preparation more or less perfect for the adoption of any scheme of emancipation which may be devised by which slavery can be abolished without greater evils to master and slave than at present exist. And many have already liberated and assisted in colonizing their slaves.

2. Through the labors of the Church, the severity of the slaves' condition has been greatly mitigated. The members of the Presbyterian Church

who hold slaves, treat them with much kindness and affection. The following testimonies are from ministers in different States of the south, having abundant opportunity to know whereof they affirm :

“ The oppression of servants by members of our Church in this part of the country, is as rare, I think, as other aggravated offences against good morals in the free States. Occasion for discipline on this account rarely occurs among Presbyterians. I have never known a case in my own charge for twenty years which I thought called for discipline. A hard master is as much despised by his neighbors here as he would be in Ohio. People in the free States have no idea how well the slaves are treated.”

“ Cruelty towards the slaves is not tolerated, and I may say that they are kindly and humanely treated.”

“ Oppression or mal-treatment of servants by masters is of rare occurrence, and such treatment by christian masters is unknown, and is a contradiction in terms. As to discipline for such an offence, it is as certainly exercised as for drunkenness or lying.”

“ Discipline for the oppression of slaves is rarely exercised in this region. I have not heard of occasions for it. But I believe this form of offence is as carefully observed, and as promptly visited with discipline as others.”

“ Our slaves are generally very kindly treated,

and oppression is not only disreputable, but exposes any one to church censure.”

“I have never known a case of the mal-treatment of a slave in a Presbyterian family during a residence of six years in the south.”

These declarations, which relate to at least six of the southern States, fully show that Presbyterians treat their servants kindly, and that the Sessions of southern churches visit undue severity with appropriate punishment, according to the injunction of the General Assembly.

3. The social rights and domestic relations of the slaves have also been to a great extent secured by the efforts of the Church. The traffic in slaves, or the sundering of domestic ties, is not practiced by Presbyterians. On this subject the following statements, from men residing in different Synods and States of the South, will be sufficient. A Virginian testifies: “Of necessity slaves are frequently sold by members of the Church, but unless they are sold for some grievous offence, very seldom without their own consent, or to persons to whom they are unwilling to go. As to parting families, there is a strong public sentiment against it; and the members of our Church generally, I think, are conscientious in not doing it.” A resident of Kentucky declares: “Public sentiment in this State does not tolerate the traffic in negroes for the purpose of gain. In all the sales I have witnessed under execution, or in the division of estates, the negro traders are never the purchasers; and I may safely say that none are sold to them to be taken

to the south, except such as are wholly unmanageable, and have been guilty of some high misdemeanors. When sold for debt, or to effect a division amongst heirs, they are always sold in such a way as not to be separated any distance from each other." Another in the same State affirms: "Our Church members do not often sell slaves or separate domestic relations. Such separations are not made but in cases of necessity." A citizen of Louisiana says: "Presbyterians who hold slaves buy them, and, I suppose, sell them, though I have known but two cases in six years in which slaves were sold by Presbyterians. In neither of these cases was there any separation of family ties." A pastor in Alabama testifies, "that none of the members of our Church in this State—and I presume I may say in the south—ever sell slaves merely for gain, none of them are slave-dealers; and that in cases of sale or purchase, there is not only great effort made to avoid sundering domestic relations, but numerous instances are constantly occurring in which great sacrifices are made to preserve these relations intact." Another in the same State declares: "I can recall no instance in which the domestic relationship has been severed, where husband and wife have been separated." One who resides in Tennessee assures us that "pious masters or church members do not often sell slaves, and so far as my knowledge extends, do never separate husbands and wives, parents and children," A resident of North Carolina affirms: "It is true that christians sometimes sell their slaves, but never

if it can be helped. A man may own a vicious negro whom he cannot manage; and for his own peace of mind, as well as to preserve the good order of the rest of his servants, he is obliged to sell him. But even then he is careful to whom he does it, and tries if he can to sell him to a good master, and if possible to one of the slave's own choice."

Another of a different State says: "Nearly all the sales of slaves I have known, have been where the owner could have no control." He of course refers to pious owners. These extracts fully suffice to show that the members of the Presbyterian Church who hold slaves, do never voluntarily sever their domestic relations, or traffic in them for gain; that they do not buy or sell except under peculiar circumstances; and that they regard the social rights, and consult the comfort and interest, temporal and eternal, of their slaves. Yet the writer is free to say, that he must not be regarded as apologizing for, much less justifying, the degree in which the chattel principle is acted upon by southern Presbyterians. He hopes the day is not distant, when every Presbyterian will be withheld by principle, from offering a fellow man for sale, under any circumstances.

4. The efforts of the Church have also resulted in the salvation of many slaves. How many have thus been prepared for glory, during the past history of the Church, we cannot tell; doubtless tens of thousands. At the present time it is presumed, there are nearly three millions of slaves in the southern States of this Union. About two-fifths of these,

or one million two hundred thousand are adults. Of these three millions, it is supposed that there are about seventy thousand, or less than one-fortieth, owned by masters who are members of the Presbyterian Church. Taking all the slave-holding States together, it is probable that about one-third of the ministers, and one-half of the members of the Church, who are heads of families, own slaves. In the year 1850, there were reported to the General Assembly 5,389 colored communicants. A few of these belong to churches in the north. A very few of them may also be free colored people of the south. But nearly one-third of the Presbyteries in the slave States did not report. Some of these are known to be actively engaged in efforts for the salvation of the slaves. It is probable, therefore, that the colored membership of the southern churches numbers 67,000. Some of these belong to masters who are not members of the Presbyterian Church. There are also slaves belonging to Presbyterians, who are members of other churches. These may, perhaps, balance each other. This number shows that a little less than one-tenth of all the slaves held by Presbyterians, are professors of religion. But three-fifths of the whole number must be presumed to be children and youth; leaving not more than thirty thousand adult slaves owned by Presbyterians. More than one-fifth, therefore, of the adult slaves belonging to members of our Church, are professors of religion. Taken together, the colored membership of the whole southern Presbyterian Church, bears to the white, the

proportion of about one to ten. In a few southern churches the colored communicants exceed in number the white. Thus, in the Salem church, of the Presbytery of Harmony, S. C., there are 168 colored and 56 white members. In the Indiantown church, there are 352 colored members and but 152 white. There 212 colored, and only 134 white communicants in the Williamsburgh church. The same is true of some others. But on the other hand, the colored membership of many churches is very small, even in communities where the blacks constitute a majority. And there are hundreds of thousands of slaves who are yet unprovided with the means of grace and salvation, to whom the Church might have access.

Whilst, therefore, the efforts of the Church have not been what they ought to have been, nor the results for good as great as could have been desired, still something has been done, and much good effected. As far as the influence of the Church has extended, cruelty towards the slaves has been caused almost to cease, as also the traffic in their persons for gain, or the mere convenience of the master. A humane, kind, and, in many instances, deeply affectionate treatment of them has been produced. Regard for their social rights and domestic relations has been secured. They have been, to a great extent, civilized, and enlightened, and elevated intellectually and morally far above the position they occupied when they were first brought to this country. Many of them have been liberated and assisted in securing a home in their father-land.

Much advance has been made in the preparation both of master and slave, for the final and complete abolition of the whole system. And many thousands of these sons of Ham have expressed the efficacy of redeeming blood, and are now in glory, or pressing on their pilgrimage thitherward. These results, which could only be secured by the blessing of God, evince that the king and head of Zion approves the efforts made for this cause.

Let the Church, then, withstand fanaticism of every form, and disregard the poisoned missiles of malice, hurled at her. Let her unite all her children with all their energies in the work of implanting the benevolence of the gospel in the hearts of southern masters, and pouring the light of salvation upon the benighted minds of the poor slaves. Let her address herself with all her power to the labor of spreading the gospel to earth's remotest bounds, that the African, the Hindoo, the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, and the victims of debasing superstition, in the form of corrupted christianity may all come, joyfully filling her gates and uniting in her homage to God. Then, notwithstanding the reproaches of some, and the anathemas of others, millions in all future ages will call her blessed, and God will smile upon her while she remains militant, and finally, crown her with glory, as a part of the Church triumphant forever.

CHAPTER VI.

ARE WE OF THE NORTHERN PART OF THE CHURCH SO INVOLVED IN THE GUILT OF SLAVERY, AS IT EXISTS IN THE SOUTHERN PORTION, AS TO MAKE SECESSION A DUTY?

The inquiry at the head of this chapter implies that there is guilt on the part of some slave-holders in the Church. It were passing strange if it were not so. The influence of selfishness, prejudice, the fashion of society at large, early education, and ignorance in reference to the evils of slavery, cannot but lead many to practice much wrong while sustaining this relation. No one could rationally claim, where so many members of the Church live under a system involving such multiplied and fearful evils, that all are guiltless. Such a claim would be preposterous. We all know the imperfection of even regenerated humanity too well to make it. It is not made here. On the other hand, it is freely admitted, nay, held, that there is guilt, great guilt, on the part of members of the Presbyterian Church, growing out of slave-holding. It can scarcely be doubted that there are members of the Church who hold slaves for their own convenience or profit, rather than the good of the slaves, and that, too, in circumstances where emancipation is entirely practicable. Nor can it be doubted that in many cases even pious masters neglect many of the duties

which they owe their slaves, as fellow immortals, just as many parents neglect their duties to their own children. Diligent, prudent, and persevering efforts, and earnest prayer, should be used by all for the removal of these evils, and the system under which they occur.

Some, however, hold that it is duty, instead of laboring any longer for their removal from the Church, to forsake the Church ourselves, and enter other organizations where slave-holding is not tolerated at all. Some, acting upon this principle, have gone out from the Church, have broken up associations long cherished as delightful and sacred, have produced division in the body of Christ, and have brought great injury upon particular portions of our loved Zion. It is, then, a question of deep interest and importance, are we of the northern part of the Church so involved in the guilt of slavery, as it exists in the southern portion, that secession becomes a duty.

The process of reasoning by which the affirmative of this question is attempted to be sustained, is of this kind: It is taken for granted that slave-holding is in itself sinful. The practice prevails in the Church, and is tolerated by the General Assembly. The Church is a unit. All its members are, therefore, partakers of the guilt of all the wrongs committed in and tolerated by the body. We are, therefore, involved in the guilt of this sin. And as we cannot immediately remove this iniquity from the Church, the only alternative that remains for us is to leave the Church.

In this reasoning there are two fallacies, either of which would vitiate the conclusion. It has already been made apparent that slave-holding is not necessarily sinful. Thus, one of the fundamental principles upon which the conclusion is based, is at once removed. This changes the whole aspect of the case. If the relation of master and slave may be sustained without sin, the Assembly cannot be guilty in tolerating it. And if the Assembly be not guilty, then may we who do not practice slave-holding, and who protest against the whole system of slavery with all its evils, be without sin? And if we do not, in consequence of our connection with the Church, partake of the guilt of slavery, of course secession, so far from being a duty, is schismatical and wrong.

But much reliance is placed upon the doctrine that the Church is a unit, and, therefore, each of its members is partaker of the guilt of all the wrongs tolerated in the body. In this there is seeming truth, and yet real error. It is true of political and other bodies of a mere earthly and temporary existence, that they are punished here for the wrongs they do. They cannot be punished any where else, as they will not exist in the world to come. They are, therefore, chastened as bodies here. And as the bodies are composed of individuals, the chastisement must of course fall upon individuals. Thus the wrongs of a civil government are often visited upon the nation, embracing those who consented to them and those who did not. Doubtless many of the French nation, even of those

who were members of the Catholic Church, did not consent to the slaughter of Protestants on St. Bartholomew's day, and at other times. But the whole French people have for many years been suffering the retribution of God for the righteous blood spilled by the government. But at the same time the individuals composing these bodies, if they protest against the wrongs perpetrated, are not held personally accountable finally, at the bar of God for them. The sins have been punished here. The guilty body has ceased to be. Its members stand as individual men before God's bar. If they have protested against these wrongs, and refused in every appropriate form to assist in their perpetration, they are guiltless. But the principle applied to these bodies is applicable to the visible Church only in a very general way. The Church stands in a relation to God very different from that of these associations. It is his own peculiar kingdom. He designs transplanting it to the skies entire, save its outward organization and its dross. And hence he deals with its members, the subject of his kingdom, more as individuals, and less as an organized visible body. And whilst in a very general way individuals are overtaken by chastisement which he may see proper to inflict upon a denominational section of the visible Church, yet each of its members will answer for his own personal sins before God, especially if he has refused participation in, and protested against sins which may have been tolerated in the body.

We think these remarks are borne out by the

history of the Church since the days of Christ. And if it were otherwise, no association of christians could exist upon earth. God commands all to be perfect. We must not indulge sin personally. We dare not throw ourselves into circumstances where we shall be partakers of other men's sins. But there is no perfection here below. No association, even though it be ecclesiastical, is free from liability to err in judgment and practice. No body upon earth is free from error, both in judgment and practice. Nor is any association capable of preventing all wrong on the part of its members. Every society of men tolerates many things that ought not to be. The tares and the wheat cannot but grow together until the harvest. Men, even christians and christian bodies, have neither the discrimination nor the power to tear them all up, without being in danger of doing more harm than good in the attempt. If, then, membership in any association necessarily makes us partakers of the sins committed by the members, and tolerated in the body, there is no alternative left but for every man to remain out of all associations, even the visible Church. The principle would, in its full operation, break up every organization upon earth. It would involve every man in inextricable difficulty. God commands every man to connect himself with the visible Church. But connection with the Church, according to this principle, involves a participation in all the sin tolerated in it; or, at least, in that branch of it with which any one is connected. But God forbids all men to sin personally, or

to place themselves in circumstances in which they would partake of the guilt of other men's sins. Which of these injunctions shall men obey? Can they obey opposite commands? Can God command opposites? A principle which leads legitimately to such consequences must be incorrect. The application of this principle would lead to other consequences, from which every good man would shrink back. The visible Church under the Mosaic dispensation, was a unit in a much stronger sense than is true of the Presbyterian Church at the present time. A single set of rulers presided over the whole Church. A single set of officers administered all its public ordinances. All its sacrifices were offered upon a single altar. To its established center all its male members were obliged to go thrice annually, for the public worship of God. And its rulers were hereditary. It was a unit, then, in a sense as high, yea, higher, than is true of any individual congregation now. But there was a time when the children of Israel became generally idolatrous. Deeper corruption and greater guilt by far existed in the Church then than exists in the Presbyterian Church now because of slavery. The immense majority, perhaps nineteen-twentieths of all the members of the visible Church, had departed from God by a fearful apostasy. Indeed, Elijah supposed himself alone for a while as an adherent of truth and right among the the hundreds of thousands of Israel. But there were seven thousand who had refused to practice the prevalent idolatry. Now, were these seven

thousand partakers of the guilt of idolatry as indulged by the mass of Israel? They must have been, according to the principle we oppose. Did God command them to come out and form an organization separate from the rest? They were bound to do so according to the principle referred to. And yet neither of these questions can be answered affirmatively. Did God even visit them with the temporal calamity which punished Israel? Doubtless in the general sufferings they would experience some evil. But God especially exempted them from the calamity which came upon the rest. "It shall come to pass that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay." This did God threaten Israel. Did this include the seven thousand who had not yielded to the prevalent idolatry? Hear God himself: "Yet have I left," or, as the margin reads, "I will leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Thus did God particularly preserve them from the chastisement of idolatry which he inflicted upon the rest. But they were more intimately connected with the whole visible Church than we are with the entire Presbyterian Church. The great mass of the Jewish Church were much more guilty than the slave-holders of the Presbyterian Church are. They remained in the body, protesting against its wrongs, and refusing to participate in its idolatrous practices. And they were manifestly justified of God. If we are guilty be-

cause of slave-holding, they were much more guilty because of idolatry. But God nowhere condemned them, but manifestly dealt with them as guiltless. Therefore, may we, without sin, remain in the Presbyterian Church. If the principle here opposed be correct, they were deeply criminal. But God declared them innocent. Who is right, God, or those who hold and practice upon this principle?

This example will have additional force when it is remembered that the Jewish Church and commonwealth were the same body. It possessed the characteristics not only of an ecclesiastical, but also of a political organization. The commonwealth was a theocracy. God himself was king. Idolatry, therefore, into which the nation had then fallen, was not only an ecclesiastical, but also a political offence. The calamities, then, which God sent were a punishment of the nation as well as of the members of the visible Church. And these seven thousand were connected with the body in both respects. We might, therefore, the more confidently expect to find them involved in the calamities by which He punished the Idolatry of Israel. But God took special care of them, and exempted them from that punishment. But He does not clear the guilty. These were not, therefore, held responsible for the sins of the members of that body with which they were connected. Hence the inference is clear, that if we refuse to practice slavery, and protest against the sins in which some slave-holders indulge, we may guiltlessly remain in

the Church. And if we may remain without sin, we cannot without guilt secede.

Take another illustration. At the time of the incarnation of the Son of God, the visible Church, which we have already seen was a unit in a much higher sense than is true of the Presbyterian Church now, was very corrupt. Formalism, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and supreme worldliness had carried away the great mass of its members. Its rulers were almost to a man ungodly. Those who administered its ordinances were generally depraved men. They had made void the divine law by their vain traditions. The chief priests and rulers were ready to imbue their hands in the blood of the Holy One. Heinous iniquity was indulged by both rulers and people. Josephus, who could be under no temptation to misrepresent his own people, than whom no one was more competent to bear testimony, describes them as exceedingly wicked. Yet Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, was a member of that Church. He attended upon all its ordinances, although they were administered by men whom he knew to be wicked. He remained in the body, participating regularly in all its public ordinances, until within a few hours of his crucifixion. Then he set aside that dispensation of the Church, as having accomplished its object, and introduced another. Now, although the character and circumstances of the Lord Jesus were peculiar, as was also the object for which he lived among men, yet as a man and an Israelite he was fully a member of that church organization in

which great guilt existed, and that not simply by the tolerance, but by the practice of its highest authorities. Was the Lord Jesus guilty on this account? Did he partake of the guilt of sins committed by the members of the body with which he was connected, and tolerated in it? According to the principle in question, none but an affirmative answer can be given. Those who advocate the principle have seen this difficulty, and have, with more boldness than regard to fact, affirmed that he came out of the Jewish Church. But did he? What child does not know the contrary? For thirty-three years he participated in all its ordinances. He attended upon the Passover, an institution of that Church, the very last evening before his crucifixion. He remained a member of it as long as it existed by divine authority, and until, by his own act it ceased altogether to be the Church of God. There is, therefore, no escape. Either Christ forsook the Jewish Church, or he partook of its sins, or the principle referred to is not correct. Surely, a principle which renders it necessary to contradict positive fact, or charge the Son of God with sin, cannot be correct, must be untrue.

But the Lord Jesus not only remained in the Church, corrupt as it was, but directed his disciples to do the same. "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." (Matth. 23: 2, 3.) After he exposed the exceed-

ing wickedness of the rules and people of Israel before his disciples, but never uttered a syllable which indicated that they must forsake the Church in order to escape participation in the guilt of that wickedness. On the other hand, by his instruction and example, he taught them to remain and punctually to attend upon all its ordinances. And hence they continued in connection with it until the death of Christ. They with him partook of the sacrament of the Passover the last time it was ever administered by divine authority. They came out only when that body ceased to be the Church of God. Were they partakers of the guilt of Israel in consequence of having pursued this course? To affirm it is to contradict the Son of God. To deny it is to set aside as utterly untrue the principles upon which many, in these days of ultraism, place so much confidence. Which horn of this dilemma shall we take?

These examples prove conclusively that each member of a church is not guilty for the sins committed or tolerated in it, unless he be consenting to them, or assisting in their perpetration; or, in other words, that by refusing to practice and protesting against sins tolerated in a body with which we are connected, we may free ourselves from the guilt of sins committed in it, at least up to that point where it becomes fearfully corrupt and ceases to be a church of God. If, then, our General Assembly were even to practice slave-holding, while we refuse to participate in it, protest against and labor for its removal, we should not, as individual

members of the Church, be held responsible for it. But how much more manifest is our freedom from sin in this matter, when it is remembered that if sin exist in consequence of slavery, it is not in the General Assembly, but in certain members of that Church, of which it is a bond of union. The Assembly has never held a slave, nor is there the remotest probability that it ever will. The guilt, then, if any exists, is not in the body as such—is not contracted by its highest authority—but by some who hold the place of members. However fully we might be regarded as responsible for the sins committed by the authorities of an association, we cannot, in the light of the illustrations already given, be held accountable for the sins of a few of its members. And this position gains additional confirmation from the fact that the General Assembly does not, even in theory, tolerate anything of slavery that is wrong. The relation itself is all that is held to be sinless. And it has already been made apparent, that this does not necessarily involve guilt. Whatever else is tolerated in practice is, as a general fact, beyond the power of the General Assembly to prevent. From all this, therefore, the conclusion is clear that we of the northern part of the Presbyterian Church do not partake of the guilt of sins which may be committed by the members of its southern portion, through the practice of slave-holding, so as to make secession a duty.

But this conclusion may still be strengthened by a consideration of our peculiar Church organization.

Ours is distinctly a constitutional republican government. It furnished originally the model after which our civil government was moulded. The governmental powers all come from God through the people. They are all vested in the hands of representatives chosen by the people. The whole Presbyterian Church may be regarded as a representative confederation of independent congregations, bound together by a common constitution and common courts of appeal and general control, rising one above another. Each congregation is independent of every other, except as it is governed by the same constitution, and amenable to the same courts which govern others. To the Session, the primary judicatory governing each congregation, belongs the power of admitting persons to membership in the Church. The Session have power to receive members into the Church, to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend, or exclude from the sacraments, those who are found to deserve censure." (Form. Gov. Chap. 9, sec. 6.) The members of the Church cannot be deprived of their rights and privileges, except by conviction before its regular courts of an offence against order, truth, or purity. And every member must be first tried by that court to which he is primarily amenable. A private member must first be tried by the Session of that Church to which he belongs; a Bishop by his own Presbytery. Each member may have a hearing in all the courts above that one in which he is first tried. For general purposes of appeal, review, and control, a number of congregations are united in a Presbyte-

ry. But the Presbytery cannot, independently of the Session, the primary court, take up or try a private member of the Church for an alleged offence. It can only act when matters are brought before it by general review and control, reference, appeal, or complaint. Each Presbytery is independent of all others, save as they are bound by the same constitution, and responsible, in some particulars, to the same courts of appeal and control. For purposes yet more general, a larger number of the churches are united in a Synod. The Synods are also independent of each other, except as they are controlled by the same constitution, and responsible to the General Assembly. Nor can they go back of the Presbytery or Session, and admit any to church privileges, originate judicial business, or enter process for an alleged offence. The utmost they can do in this respect is, to issue all matters brought regularly before them in some one of the forms already adverted to; and, in extreme cases, where great disorders are credibly reported to exist, to direct the lower judicatories to examine into the matter. And should the lower judicatories neglect or refuse to act upon the subject, the most that can be done by the Synods is, to pass a general censure of their course. They cannot deprive them of their rights as members of the Church. No provision is made by our constitution for the bringing of criminal charges by one judicatory against another. Nor is any provision made for revolutionary measures. For purposes yet more general, the Presbyteries are all united in a General Assembly.

This is a bond of union, and a court of final appeal and ultimate control for the whole Church. The power of the Assembly is only declarative. It cannot legislate for the Church. It cannot travel beyond the limit of constitutional law. Nor can it pass over the lower judicatories, and originate judicial process against any member of the Church. It cannot affect the standing or privileges of the meanest member, except as his case may come regularly before it, in one of the forms before indicated. If the Assembly be officially or credibly informed of the manifest violation of constitutional rule, it may enjoin upon the proper judicatory to take the matter up and issue it. That issue, if it come before the Assembly in any regular form, may be confirmed or reversed. But the General Assembly is not possessed of episcopal authority to go where it pleases and do what it pleases. It is, bound by constitutional rule within the sphere for which it was created.

It is manifest, then, that each congregation in the Presbyterian Church is independent of every other congregation, in most respects. Each is left to conduct its own matters according to its own choice, governed only by the constitution, and responsible to the higher courts. Here all processes for alleged offences against private members must begin. One congregation cannot enter process against another. A member of one congregation may bring charges against a member of another, but it must be before that Session to which the person charged is directly amenable. Congregations, then,

can exert an influence in each other's judicial proceedings, or, in reference to the admission of members to the Church, only through the Presbytery, and in particulars which come legitimately under its control. As individuals, then, or congregations, we are entirely unable to reach slave-holders by way of discipline, or so as to prevent their introduction to the Church in other congregations. The Presbyteries are also independent of each other. They are at liberty to conduct their internal affairs as to them seems best, subject only to the review and control of their respective Synods. Again, one Presbytery cannot constrain another to exercise discipline in a certain way, nor at all, except through the Synod, and in particulars to which the authority of the Synod extends, according to the constitution. So that, as Presbyteries, we cannot reach slave-holders in other Presbyteries, with a view to their discipline, except through the Synod, and to the extent of the Synod's authority in the premises. Farther, the Synods are independent of each other in like manner, being responsible only to the General Assembly. One Synod cannot affect the discipline of another, save through the Assembly, and in reference to subjects to which its authority extends. No Synod, therefore, can affect the standing of slave-holders in the churches of any other Synod, except as it may be able to influence the action of the General Assembly.

From all this it is manifest that, as individual members or churches, we cannot reach the slave-holders in the southern portions of the Church, so

as to discipline or constrain them to cease holding slaves. As Presbyteries, we cannot effect this object. Nor can we, as members, churches, Presbyteries, and Synods combined, secure the removal of slave-holding from the Church, unless it be through the General Assembly, and by means of some constitutional rule which it can apply so as to effect this object. But there exists no such constitutional rule. The matter is, therefore, beyond our reach by any disciplinary or judicial means. It is left just where it ought to be, in the hands of the lower judicatories, those having primary authority over the persons concerned in slave-holding, and the territory where the practice prevails. If, therefore, wrong exists in the Church, the Session of that particular congregation in which it is found, is primarily responsible for it. If the knowledge of it come in a constitutional way to the Presbytery, and it be a matter which it can act upon, the members of the Presbytery become responsible. If it come regularly before the Synod, its members are accountable for its continuance. And if it be brought before the General Assembly, and lies within the range of the constitutional power of the Assembly, there is a responsibility cast upon the whole Church. And if the case be there improperly decided, according to our convictions, we meet our responsibility, and relieve our consciences, by protesting against the decision, and striving to secure its change.

Certainly, then, in view of the degree in which the parts of the Church are independent of each

other, the general nature of their union, the impossibility of one part controlling the discipline of another, except through the higher judicatories, and by constitutional rule, and the fact that no such rule exists excluding slave-holders from the Church, it is utterly preposterous to hold us partakers of the guilt, if there be any, of slave-holding, as practiced in the Church, so as to make secession a duty.

The force of this kind of reasoning is felt to be resistless, when applied to our connection with the civil government. Our government not only tolerates the holding of slaves, but the whole slave system. It bears no testimony against the evils growing out of it. It makes direct provision for the perpetuation of the system, as long as the States in which it exists shall desire. The States with which we are associated, have created the system, enacted the iniquitous laws by which it is fully carried out, and uphold, justify, and perpetuate it with all its enormous evils. We are all citizens of the general government thus sustaining slavery. We are all citizens of a particular State, affiliated with other States, which have created, and justify, and perpetuate all the horrors of slavery. But few, very few, and those regarded as fanatical, deem it duty to secede from the State on this account. Very few feel themselves necessarily involved in the guilt of slavery, in consequence of their political relations, so as to make secession from the government an absolute duty. But it is at once manifest, that our participation in the guilt of slavery, if there be any such participation in either

case, is much more direct and fearful through our civil than through our ecclesiastical relations. The slave system, with all its horrors, is an institution of the States in which it prevails. With these States ours is associated in a general government. And this general government makes provision for the defence, support and perpetuation of this institution. The Church, on the other hand, finds the system existing. She cannot directly or speedily effect its removal. She bears testimony against all its evils, enjoins the application of the golden rule in the treatment of those who are held as slaves, encourages emancipation, but permits the relation of master and slave, in view of the circumstances in which many of her members are placed. Our connection, therefore, with slavery, and all its evils, as citizens, is much more direct and intimate than it is as members of the Church. How, then, do men who plead for secession from the Church, still quietly retain their places as citizens, and feel no guilt? Is citizenship of more value than membership in the Church? Are the union and integrity of the States of greater worth than the unity and harmony of the body of Christ? Are our civil relations more sacred than our ecclesiastical? Nor is it enough to affirm, as some do, that they have left a particular political party. The guilt does not lie in the party peculiarly, but in the government itself. Nothing but absolute secession from the government, or expatriation, will, according to the principle here opposed, deliver men from guilt, in this particular. No other course is con-

sistent for those who secede from the Church. These persons plead, in justification, the general nature of the union of the non-slave-holding with the slave-holding States, their entire want of power to remove the evil, and their testimony against it, and efforts in a general way for its removal. We deem, as they do, the plea abundantly sufficient to show their freedom from personal guilt in the matter. But if it be sufficient to prove that they do not partake of the sin of slavery, when applied to their civil, it is much more than sufficient when applied to their ecclesiastical relations. It is utterly vain to affirm, that whilst we are unable, as citizens, to remove slavery from the State, as christians, we can remove it from the Church. As citizens, we can exert our personal influence to produce such a public sentiment as we desire upon the subject. And we can do precisely the same as christians in the Church. We may, as citizens, indirectly by our vote, and directly by our representatives, oppose the continuance of the slave system. As christians we may personally, if we have a place in any of the Church courts, if not, by our chosen representatives, oppose the practice of slaveholding in the Church. In the State, if we are overborne by numbers, we may dissent, but can go no farther. In the Church, if a majority be against us, we may record our protest, but can do no more. Our power is as great in the one case, therefore, as in the other. If, therefore, any one may, without incurring guilt, remain a citizen of the United States government, much more may he remain in

the Presbyterian Church without sin, in consequence of slavery. And if he may remain without sin, he cannot without sin secede.

But it may be proper also, as bearing upon this point, to ascertain whether the General Assembly has power to exclude those who hold slaves from the Church, simply on that account. For it must be manifest, that if the Assembly, the highest court known to the Church, cannot, in the due exercise of its authority, reach the difficulty, we cannot be held responsible for its existence. Let us, then, look at the constitutional powers of the General Assembly. The boundaries within which it may act, are distinctly marked out. Nor can they be passed without injury, or even perhaps ruin to the Church. They are thus defined:

“The General Assembly shall receive and issue all appeals and references which may be regularly brought before them from the inferior judicatories; they shall review the records of every Synod, and approve or censure them; they shall give their advice and instruction in all cases submitted to them, in conformity with the constitution of the Church; they shall constitute the bond of union, peace, correspondence, and mutual confidence among all our churches.”

“To the General Assembly also belongs, the power of deciding all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline, of reproving, warning, or bearing testimony against error in doctrine, or immorality in practice, in any Church, Presbytery, or Synod; of erecting new Synods, when it may be

judged necessary; of superintending the concerns of the whole Church; of corresponding with foreign Churches, on such terms as may be agreed upon by the Assembly and the corresponding body; of suppressing schismatical contentions and disputations, and, in general, of recommending and attempting reformation of manners and the promotion of charity, truth, and holiness throughout all the churches under their care." Form. Gov. ch. 12, sec. 4, 5.

Such is the description of all the powers possessed by the Assembly. Under which of these specifications could they proceed to exclude those who hold slaves, simply on that account, from the Church? None of them seem to give such power, unless it be that one which grants authority to "decide all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline." But this must refer to the manner of exercising discipline, and not the rules. The rules of discipline are embodied in the constitution. But the Assembly cannot make a constitutional rule. "Before any overtures or regulations proposed by the Assembly, to be established as constitutional rules, shall be obligatory upon the churches, it shall be necessary to transmit them to all the Presbyteries, and to receive the returns of at least a majority of them, in writing, approving thereof." (For. Gov. ch. 12, sec. 6.) The only constitutional method by which the Assembly could reach the case, would be, to propose to the Presbyteries the adoption of a rule declaring the slave-holder excluded from the Church. But to propose such a

thing would only be to produce agitation, and invite defeat. The Presbyteries have not yet sufficiently lost discrimination between names and things, relations and practices, legal authority to do wrong and actual wrong doing, to affirm such a proposition. But until such a rule exists, for the Assembly to undertake by discipline to remove slave-holders from the Church, merely on account of their sustaining this relation, or by authority to prevent their introduction to it, would be to assume power that does not belong to them. Such a usurpation would be dangerous, nay, ruinous. Instead of being a bond of union, the Assembly would thus distract, divide, and destroy the Church. And nothing could be gained by this means, even to the cause of emancipation.

But might not the General Assembly interpret the existing rules relating to offences, so as to make slave-holding worthy of discipline under these rules? Suppose they should give such an interpretation. Would it have the force of positive law? Would it be universally binding? If not, then to adopt it would be but child's play. If it would, then it would be, in effect, a constitutional rule. And if an interpretation given in one instance by the Assembly, in a case in which a majority of the Church would not coincide, is absolutely binding, then in any other, yea, in all other cases, it would be also. And then the General Assembly may bind the whole Church as they please. They may place it upon an iron beadstead, and cut and stretch it at their pleasure. Then, instead of our boasted

free republic, we shall have an oligarchy with the powers of an autocrat. Would the Church—would those who urge secession as a duty—submit to such a state of things? Neither, therefore, by the enactment of a law which might apply to the case, nor by the interpretation of existing law so as to make it apply, nor in any other way consistently with the genius of our government, can the Assembly secure a basis of action by which they can exclude those who hold slaves, merely on that account, from the Church, unless they shall be guilty of perpetrating some of the wrongs which frequently grow out of the system of slavery, bringing them under the operation of the existing law relating to offences, of which their own Session are primarily to judge. The only conceivable way in which the Assembly could reach the case would be, to prove in the first place, to the satisfaction of a majority of the Church, that the relation of master and slave is, in itself, and under all circumstances, sinful; then send down to the Presbyteries the proposition to establish a constitutional rule declaring it an offence worthy of discipline. The law being thus regularly enacted, the remaining work is easily and quickly done. But otherwise, the Assembly cannot effect the removal of slave-holding from the Church. And if they cannot remove those who indulge this practice, we of the North cannot reasonably be held to be partakers of any sin that may grow out of it. And if this be true, secession is wrong.

But suppose the General Assembly should attempt

the work of expurgating the Church of all slaveholders. The Sessions of all the southern churches are enjoined to discipline every individual sustaining the relation of master to slaves, and if he persist, suspend or excommunicate him. But the Session, finding no rule binding them to this course, and feeling that it would be injurious and unjust to many, if not to all, refuse to obey. What, then, shall be done? Cite them to appear before the bar of the Assembly for contumacy? But contumacy implies the right of the court to command. They refuse to appear. They will not recognize the right of the Assembly thus to usurp authority over them. What then? Cut them off? Consistency would seem to demand this course. It would be easy thus to drive the plowshare of division through the Church, to convert this home of peace and love into an arena of discord and bitter strife, to bring the blight of ruin upon this heritage of the Lord; but not so easy to promote the interests of truth, and peace, and purity. But has the Assembly any authority to prescribe terms of communion at pleasure, and cut off those who refuse to submit? To assume such a position, and pursue such a course, would be to punish the innocent with the guilty, to cut off the non-slave-holding with the slave-holding members of southern churches. This would be wholly unjust. It would, moreover, be an assumption of authority which, besides being unconstitutional, would be exceedingly dangerous.

Any attempt at discrimination by the Assembly, so as to exclude those only who are slave-holders,

would be equally unconstitutional. There are but three ways in which a member of the Presbyterian Church can cease regularly to be a member. God may, by the hand of death, give him a dismissal. He may be dismissed at his own request by the Session. Or he may be excommunicated by a criminal process, which results in his conviction. No Session can exclude any one from the Church without regular trial and conviction; neither can the General Assembly. It is simply a high court of appeal and general control. This work belongs primarily and exclusively to the Church Session. Even if there existed a constitutional rule upon the subject, therefore, the Assembly could not exercise discipline against individuals, save in cases brought before it by appeal, or otherwise, from the Session, much less when no rule exists. If there was a law reaching the case, the Assembly of course could enjoin its application upon the lower judicatories, and take account of their fidelity in the matter. But there is no such law, and, therefore, it can neither exercise discipline itself, nor enjoin it authoritatively upon the inferior courts. Neither in the mass, then, nor as individuals, can the Assembly reach the slave-holding members of the Church, so as to deprive them of their membership. And any attempt to discipline them now would only excite heart-burnings, produce divisions, and spread the blight of desolation over the whole Church, without effecting anything toward the removal of slavery. Nay, by exciting the indignation of the southern churches, and leading them to more

strenuous efforts at self-justification, it would put farther off the day of final emancipation.

It is perfectly clear, then, we think, that the General Assembly cannot reach the difficulty complained of, as terms of communion and rules of discipline are not established by it, but by the Church. And manifestly the Assembly itself cannot be held responsible for that which is beyond its control. And it is yet more manifest, that the members of the Church are responsible for the refusal of the Assembly to take a certain course, only when the constitution gives it the power to pursue that course. Equally clear is it, that we cannot be held to partake of the guilt of sins that may be indulged by other parts of the Church, except where we may prevent them by our personal influence, or through the judicatories of the Church. We cannot, therefore, be regarded as partakers of the wrongs of those members of our Church in the south who hold slaves, if they practice wrong. And, therefore secession is not a duty.

But, in farther vindication of this point, it must also be noted, that we are, according to our peculiar Church polity, left free to testify against, and labor for the removal of anything we deem wrong in the Church, either in the practice of its members, or its judicatories, or in its arrangements. This freedom, with us, is perfect. In this no man may restrict us. We may testify against all the evils of slavery. And if our convictions lead us to regard the relation of master and slave as wrong in itself, we may testify against that also. This

testimony we may reiterate as often and as strongly as we choose, and in any form we prefer, provided that we do not trample upon the essential principles of order and peace. We may labor in any way in which we can bring our influence to bear for the removal of the evil of slavery from the Church and from the land. In such labors we may spend our energies, our possessions, and our days. This fact furnishes all an opportunity to deliver themselves from all participation in any sin which may result from slave-holding, even if it would otherwise attach to them. It cannot surely be supposed that we are personally guilty for that, in the conduct of our brethren, which we cannot prevent, in which we refuse to participate, but against which we testify, and strive to induce them to forsake it. Were Moses and Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and all the prophets partakers of the sin which was indulged in by the house of Israel, in their days—sin far exceeding, in many instances, that which is supposed to arise from slave-holding as it prevails in the Presbyterian Church? No one will dare assert this. And yet these iniquities were committed by their fellow members of the Church, and winked at sometimes, if not openly encouraged, by those who were in authority, both in Church and State. But they protested against them and labored to turn the people away from them. And thus they washed their hands of the guilt. Was the divine Redeemer partaker of the sins of Israel in his day—those gross sins perpetrated by the great mass of the people—and espe-

cially by those in authority? God forbid. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Yet he was a member of the same church organization with these sinners, and attended upon the ordinances of religion as administered by them. He even ate the Passover, which was an ordinance of the whole church, on the very evening before his crucifixion, with his betrayer, yea, and with those who had resolved upon his murder. But he testified against all their sins and labored to turn them away from them. It was doubtless thus that he avoided participation in them. This principle was distinctly recognized by God in dealing with Israel. His language to them by Moses was, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him;" or, as the margin reads, "That thou bear not sin for him." This enjoins the duty of rebuking a sinning neighbor, recognizes the neglect of this duty as a participation of his sin, and implies that its discharge delivers from all such participation. Upon this principle good men in all ages, whose lot was cast in corrupt communities, have escaped their guilt. And this principle manifestly accords with right reason. It is the will of God that we should live together in civil society. It is his pleasure that all should be connected with the visible Church. The Church was organized to be the home of all that love him on earth. And for the promotion of man's temporal interests and happiness, civil government was instituted. But

both these are, though not equally, imperfect. Many things will necessarily occur in both that are wrong. No conscientious man can participate, or even acquiesce, in those things which he is convinced are wrong. But in many instances he cannot prevent their existence in the government or church organization with which he is connected. What, then, shall he do? He cannot, in accordance with duty, forsake these associations, civil and ecclesiastical. He cannot prevent their wrongs. Must he remain and partake of their guilt? Has God placed him in such a dilemma that opposing obligations rest upon him—that he cannot escape without sin? It cannot be. There must be some method of avoiding sin. In many instances the principle already referred to seems the only one which furnishes a means of safety from personal guilt in consequence of association with others. By testifying against the sins of associations with which men are connected, and laboring for their removal, they may avoid guilt, at least up to a certain point in their career of iniquity. If this principle be not correct, then the following contradiction and absurdity follow: God commands all to enter society, both civil and ecclesiastical. He also forbids all to sin. But all societies are necessarily imperfect here, and often do those things that are sinful. God, then, commands men not to sin, and yet to take a course that will inevitably involve them in guilt. Or, in other words, he binds them not to sin, and yet to associate with others so as to partake of the guilt of their sins.

Can this be so? It must be, unless their want of ability to prevent their testimony against and efforts to remove these sins deliver them from guilt. Reason, then, Scripture truth, and history concur in showing that proper testimony against the sins of a body with which we are associated, and proper efforts to prevent them, deliver us from their guilt. If, then, it were even admitted that ordinarily we do partake of any guilt that may arise out of slave-holding, as practiced in the Church, we may free ourselves of it by bearing testimony against and striving to bring about its removal. And, as in the Presbyterian Church, we are left perfectly free to do both these, if we are faithful we cannot be held guilty, or regarded as under any obligation to leave the Church on account of slavery.

The objection to this, that it would produce collision between the church courts and division in the Church, is futile. There is a wide distinction between bearing testimony, and establishing rules of discipline. Should any part of the Church enact a law by which those who hold slaves should, on that account, be disciplined or deprived of their rights, it would of course be unconstitutional, and, if persisted in, would produce collision and ruin. But to legislate is one thing, and to bear testimony quite another. Our protest against anything we deem wrong in the Church, may be as strong as we choose to make it, provided only, that it take not the form of legislation, and no collision or disturbance of order or harmonious action need occur.

But there is still another principle applicable here, which we do well to regard. There are, doubtless, circumstances which would render it duty to separate from any body. God, called to the faithful who were found in the Roman Catholic Church, "come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." But in order to make this separation a duty, the wrong indulged must not only be great, but it must also have become the settled and permanent habit of the body. Has slave-holding become the permanent practice of the members of the Presbyterian Church? So far from it that slavery cannot be regarded as a permanent institution in our land. The great mass of the greatest and best men of our country look forward with deep solicitude to the day of its final abolition, and hope that it many not be very distant. We are safe in affirming that three-fourths of those members of the Church who reside in slave-holding States, are opposed strongly to the existence of the slave-system, and anxious for its abolition. And it remains only because they have not the power, nor do they know how safely to remove it. And, if the whole Church be taken together, it may safely be asserted, that nine-tenths of its members are opposed to the existence of slavery, and are longing and praying for its removal. Can that be regarded as a permanent practice of the body, which is partially indulged by a small minority of the members, and to which such an immense majority are opposed, and for the removal of which

they are laboring? It is manifest that slave-holding will cease the moment the system is abolished. And as so large a majority of the members of the Presbyterian Church are opposed to the system, and striving to bring about its removal, they are clearly laboring for the abolition of the relation itself. Slave-holding, then, cannot be regarded as a permanent practice of any portion of the Presbyterian Church. But if slavery even had a permanent place in that part of the Church where the relation is now tolerated, that would not alter the case. A body is not to be characterized by any peculiarity of a small minority of its members. To involve all in guilt, and justify secession, the wrong must be the act of the body. Now a body acts only through its regularly constituted authorities. The Presbyterian Church acts through the General Assembly. But the General Assembly has never practiced slavery. It never will do so. It has never tolerated the slave-system, or the evils connected with it, but has borne frequent and decided testimony against them. It has declared many of them offences worthy of discipline. It has urged the Church in every prudent and practicable way to hasten the complete abolition of the whole system. Most manifestly, then, slavery has never found toleration, nor has simple slave-holding ever been practiced by the Assembly, or become a permanent habit in any part of the Presbyterian Church. But until it does so, secession on that account must continue wholly uncalled for and unjustifiable.

That this position is correct, is evident from the teachings of God in the Apocalypse. Many and fearful were the corruptions of the Church of Rome, as early as the seventh century. It is deeply interesting, then, to ascertain at what period the children of God were commanded to come out of her, that they might avoid a participation of her guilt, and escape her plagues. In the record, this command is not found until the 18th chapter and 4th verse of the book of Revelation. Now, whatever may be the precise period in the history of the Romish Church referred to, it is manifest that the giving of this command synchronized with her entire apostacy from the position of a church of God. It was after the announcement, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen." It was after there was written upon the forehead of the Church of Rome, "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." It was subsequent to her having "become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." That the true children of God would have done positively wrong in coming out of the Church of Rome at an earlier period, is not here affirmed. But that the authoritative voice from heaven, enjoining secession upon them all prior to that period, was heard, no one will dare assert. It was only then, that it became impossible to remain in her communion, without partaking of her sins. It was then, that that Church, as such, and through her highest authorities, became wholly apostate. The fearful wrongs indulged, became

the settled and permanent habit of the body, and gave character to it. And then to remain in it would have been to partake of its guilt, and receive of its plagues. Now, in this case, the spirit of God has delineated the progressive development of wrong in the Church, from the point of purity onward to that of entire apostacy from God. And most manifestly he has not absolutely enjoined secession until the latter point has been reached. The wrongs practiced must, therefore, be very great; they must be the acts of the body itself, and not simply of a few of its members, and they must be its settled practice, so as to involve apostacy, before an obligation to withdraw exists. But slaveholding, as tolerated by the General Assembly, cannot be proved to be a very great wrong; it is not the act of the Church as a body, and it is not the settled, permanent practice of even a small portion of its members; and even those who plead for secession dare not affirm that the Presbyterian Church has become wholly apostate. No one can, therefore, be under obligation to separate from the Church on this account.

But the Scriptures are a perfect rule of conduct, under all circumstances. No step should be taken for which we have not their authority or sanction. But they no where enjoin separation from a Church simply upon the ground that some evils exist and are tolerated in it for a time. Reformation and not secession is the rule of Christ in all cases not involving apostacy. There is significancy in that direction of the Redeemer, "let both"—tares and

wheat—"grow together until the harvest." In the most degenerate times of the Old Testament Church, God never commanded his children to separate from her, or form another organization within her.

We have already seen that neither Christ nor his Apostles separated from her until she ceased to be the Church of God. In the earlier history of the Church of Corinth, such wickedness as cannot be named in christian society, was not only indulged by an individual, but boasted of by the mass of its members, and tolerated by its authorities. Did Paul direct the sincere followers of Christ to come out from the Church? By no means. He commanded the Church to purge out the leaven of wickedness (1 Cor. 5: 7). In the churches of Pergamos, Thyatira, and Laodicea there existed fearful iniquities. Were the saints enjoined to separate from those churches? Not a sentence to that effect is found in the record. The churches were commanded to repent and purify themselves, and threatened with judgments if they did not. But the saints, so far from being called to come out of them, were commended for the graces which they manifested in the midst of abounding iniquity. But certain passages of Scripture are referred to as proving the duty of secession. Let us examine them. The first of these we notice is, 1 Cor. 5: 11: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one,

no, not to eat.” Paul is here manifestly addressing the Church. But how does a Church refuse to keep company with such an one? Clearly by refusing to receive him to its fellowship; or, if he be in it, by expelling him by the regular forms of discipline. Precisely thus did the Apostle direct the Corinthian Church. Thus, in verse 7, he says: “Purge out, therefore, the old leaven that ye may be a new lump;” and, in verse 13, “Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” Another passage referred to is, 2 Thes. 3: 6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us. Here, again, the Church at large are addressed. How, then, are they to withdraw from a disorderly brother? He tells them, in verse 7, by “noting that man and refusing to have company with him, that he may be ashamed.” And we have already seen that a Church refuses to keep company with any such one, by “putting away from among themselves that wicked person” by the regular exercise of discipline. These passages, therefore, which are so much relied upon, clearly have no reference to secession, but simply prove the obligation of churches to exercise proper discipline, expelling unworthy members. Another passage adduced is, 2 Cor. 6: 17: “Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” But the slightest examination of the context will show, that this call is to

separate from the world, from unbelievers, infidels, and idolators, by a consistent practice of religion. The passage has not, therefore, the remotest bearing upon the point. But in order to force these Scriptures into the support of secession, it has been alleged, that separation and the exercise of discipline are essentially the same. This surely is too absurd to impose upon any reflecting mind. Does a government which expels the traitor simply withdraw from him? Does an individual who, being dissatisfied with his government, expatriates himself, send his whole country into exile? There is no similarity between the acts. Discipline is the authoritative act of a Church regularly organized, and performed according to an established and Scriptural order. Separation is the act of individuals without authority, without organization, and without order. How preposterous, then, to allege the passages that prove the former in proof of the latter. The only other passage relied upon for this purpose is Rev. 18: 4: "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." This call, we have already seen, was to separation from the Church of Rome after she had fallen from the position of a Church of Christ. It is, therefore, a most gross perversion to apply it to prove that secession from the Presbyterian Church is a duty.

But, it may be asked, if the Church does not discharge her duty, but retains within her pale unworthy members, whose communion pollutes, what shall be done? Will not the fellowship of these

individuals bring guilt upon all the sincere disciples of Christ, and render separation a duty? Not if proper testimony be borne against this conduct, and appropriate efforts be made to induce the Church to act otherwise. And for this obvious reason: the Church has power to expel unworthy members, but individuals have not. There is not, therefore, in the Scriptures a single passage which directly or indirectly teaches that separation from the Presbyterian Church is a duty.

It should also be carefully observed that such a separation as is plead for, effects nothing of value in the way of escaping a participation in other men's sins. Those who secede claim that they retain all the doctrines held by the Presbyterian Church, save that which relates to slave-holding. They hold that, by separating, they avoid communing with those who hold slaves, and a participation of their guilt. But do they avoid communing with slave-holders? Is the Lord's Supper a sectarian institution? Does it not belong to the whole visible Church, made up of all denominations who "profess the true religion?" Are the seceders not still in the Church? Are not the slave-holders in it? One design of this ordinance is, to be a bond of union and communion with the whole visible Church. Should any, therefore, separate, and set up an organization of their own, if they profess the true religion, their organization is a part of the visible Church; and when they attend upon the ordinance of the Supper, they commune with the whole Church just as really as

though they had not separate denominational existence. And if the Presbyterian be a part of the visible Church, the seceders still hold communion with its members.

Nor is it true that even when we sit at the same communion table with others, we endorse their views as according to truth, or their character as the true children of God. We simply recognize those with whom we commune as members of the visible Church, and, as a general thing, those of whom we hope that they are the true followers of Christ. Nor do we thus bear any testimony as to the right or the wrong of their membership. This principle is recognized in our Book of Discipline, ch. 3, sec. 3 :

“An offence, gross in itself, and known to several, may be so circumstanced that it plainly cannot be prosecuted to conviction. In such cases, however grievous it may be to the pious to see an unworthy member in the Church, it is proper to wait until God in his righteous providence shall give further light.”

We may know of a member or members of the Church, that they are thieves or murderers, and yet, under this rule, it may be our duty to commune with them. Do we endorse their character or conduct in so doing? By no means. And in the present imperfect state of humanity and of the Church, it is impossible to avoid acting according to this rule. When Jesus communed in the Passover with the Jews, and in the supper with Judas, did he endorse their views, conduct, or character?

Most certainly he did not. If it be otherwise, then do we act a solemn lie before God almost every time we commune. And thus also did the Son of God. Even, therefore, if we sat down at the same table with slave-holders, we should not necessarily recognize their views, or acts, or character as right, but simply their membership in the Church. The opposite doctrine has produced incalculable mischief by multiplying sects among protestant christians.

But there are still other forms of christian communion, in which those who secede indulge without restraint with members of the Presbyterian Church. In all the more common ordinances of divine worship, both public and private, they mingle freely; they have frequent and delightful fellowship. And if a member pass from the Presbyterian Church to this new organization, his certificate of membership secures his admission. Thus do they hold communion with and recognize it as a branch of the visible Church, and its members as entitled to all the rights and privileges of members of the true Church. These views of christian communion, accord with the teaching of the Confession of faith. The following is its language, Conf. Faith, ch. 26, secs. 1, 2:

“1. All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory; and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance

of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

“2. Saints by profession, are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification.”

The establishment of a separate organization, therefore, that we may be able to spread the table of the Lord apart from all unworthy professors, and avoid communion with them, is uncalled for in the nature of the ordinance. It is also an impracticability. We cannot thus avoid fellowship with corrupt branches and members of the Church, in any degree that will at all compensate for the evils produced by separation. Nothing of value can be gained in this respect, nor in any other, as we shall see more fully hereafter, by secession.

Let it farther be observed, that the great king and head of Zion dwells in the Presbyterian Church. Her ministry, both at home and in the midst of the benighted heathen, he makes instruments of sanctification to his people, and of salvation to many sinners. With her assemblies he meets. In her sanctuaries he records his name, and manifests his power to bless and to save. At her communion table he appears “the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely,” pouring light and life and joy upon the souls of those who eat and drink. Her children grow up as willows by the water courses; and many thousands are, from year to year, joining her communion, of such as

give evidence that they are God's precious ones. Before her he is opening extensive fields of usefulness, and enabling her to enter them. And he is giving her more and more, from time to time, the capacity to bless the wretched race of man. If Jesus, therefore, dwells in her midst, attends her communions, and gives her his blessing, can it be the duty of his children to flee from her, avoid her fellowship, and work division, mischief and ruin within her?

Now almost any one of these considerations is of itself sufficient to establish the truth, that we of the north do not participate in the wrong of slavery as it exists in the southern portion of the Church, so as to make secession a duty. But unite them all. Consider that the holding of slaves as tolerated by the Church, is not sinful; that if many in holding them do sin, we are not responsible, since God does not deal with the members of the Church as with temporary bodies of men; that good men of old, and even the Son of God himself, remained in a corrupt Church without sin. Remember, also, that such is the nature of our Church organization that we cannot reach the difficulty; nor can the General Assembly effect its removal; that we are left free to testify against it and labor for its extinction; and that no absolute obligation to secede exists, until the guilt becomes great, is the act of the body itself, and not merely of some of its members, and is the permanent habit of the body; all of which is wholly untrue of the Presbyterian Church. Reflect, farther, that the Scriptures no

where enjoin separation until the Church becomes wholly apostate; that nothing of value in any respect is gained by such a course, and that Jesus dwells in the midst of the Presbyterian Church. The combined force of all these considerations, brought to bear in the argument, furnishes as near a demonstration as almost any moral proposition is capable of. He, therefore, who secedes from the Presbyterian Church to escape the guilt of slavery, egregiously mistakes the path of duty. However honest he may be at heart, he has very imperfectly studied the general principles of God's government over men.

But we are inclined to push this matter farther still, and inquire, can we of the north withdraw from the Church, on account of the slaveholding tolerated in it, without guilt? It is manifest that secession is a virtual withholding of the gospel from the south. Slavery is a civil institution which cannot possibly be removed in a year, or, perhaps, in a generation. It is so completely woven into the structure of society in all its departments, that it is impossible to eradicate it in a few years. And the mass of slave-holders are not yet convinced that they do wrong in holding their slaves. If the Church, therefore, take the position that no man can be a member who holds slaves, she will be constrained to withdraw from among slave-holders, leaving both masters and slaves to perish, so far as she is concerned, without the gospel. That this will be the practical result is clear from the history of the Associate and Re-

formed Presbyterian churches. These bodies have taken ground nearly as high as that contended for by Presbyterian separatists. And the consequence has been, that their congregations in the slave States have languished and died. They have almost, if not wholly, ceased to have an existence in those States. The Methodist Episcopal and the Baptist churches divided but a few years since, on the account of slavery. The result is, that the northern divisions of these bodies have scarcely any congregations in slave States. So far as all these churches are concerned, the masters and slaves are left to go on the way to death almost without a single effort to save them. Precisely similar would be the result of separation from the Presbyterian Church on the part of its northern members. Secession is, therefore, a virtual withdrawal of the gospel from the south. But is not that principle incorrect, and of ruinous tendency, which forbids the Church to obey the command of Christ, "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"? Did the Apostles proceed thus? The Roman government and people were both slaveholders and gross idolators. Did the Apostles refuse to preach the gospel to them until they had changed the whole structure of society, civil and domestic, and abolished their systems of slavery and idolatry? By no means. They went into their midst, and preached to them, that turning from their idols they should serve the living God; and ceasing their oppression, they should "forbear threatening" their servants, "give them that which is

just and equal," and act toward them in the spirit of the golden rule, remembering their accountability at God's bar. Besides, the gospel is the great, the only effective purifier of human nature, and human society. It is only by means of the gospel that slave-holders can be taught their duty, or led to liberate their slaves, or deal justly and kindly with them. How absurd, then, to withhold from them the light, until they act as if they possessed it; to demand of them rectitude, whilst withholding from them the means of knowing what duty is, and the motive necessary to lead to its discharge! Should a physician say to his patient, "your disease is too virulent now, but cast off the violence of this distemper, and then I will prescribe for you," and the patient should die, would he be held guiltless? Should men be commanded, under a severe penalty, to make brick without being furnished with straw, or even informed of its necessity? But separatists demand that slave-holders should exhibit the graces of the gospel whilst they withhold the gospel itself from them, or be left to perish.

Farther still: the Church is the great instrument which God uses to disseminate the gospel, that regenerator of society, that rectifier of all its evils. And of course, just in proportion as she is united, all her parts vigorously co-operating, is she able successfully to accomplish this work. And in proportion as she is divided, is she rendered weak and incapable of success. Separatists, then, as they claim, in order to rectify the evils of society, and

perform the work for which the Church alone is competent, because divinely ordained and qualified, labor to distract and divide her, and cripple all her energies. Is not this absurd? Is it not wicked?

But unjustifiable secession is manifestly schism. Of those who are guilty of schism, Paul warns the Church at Rome. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the people." (Rom. 16: 17, 18.) In a like strain he rebukes certain of the Corinthians: "For ye are yet carnal; for whereas, there is among you envying and strife and divisions, (or, as the margin reads, 'factions,') are ye not carnal?" To separate from the Presbyterian Church, on account of slavery, must be regarded as coming under the condemnation of these passages, if, as we think, has fully been proved, secession is not a duty. To indulge alienation of feeling from the Church to such an extent as to produce a disruption of former relations with her, cannot but be an injury to the spiritual comfort and progress of those who take such a step. And it is almost necessarily connected with such alienation of feeling between christian brethren, as breaks up relations and associations rendered sacred by long continuance and holy communion. Christian fellowship is thus marred, and the worst passions of depraved humanity are often excited. And by this means the Church is

weakened and distracted, and her aggressive efforts upon the domain of the common enemy, and her labors for the salvation of men, are much enfeebled and rendered much less effective. The chariot of the gospel is impeded in its progress, and souls are left to go untaught down to endless ruin. Besides, if it be the duty of one to secede, then is it the duty of all who are not slave-holders. Thus would the dividing line run through the midst of the Church, and of many individual congregations. And the different parts would be left to bite and devour one another, and waste their energies in mutual denunciation. The work of spreading the gospel would be greatly retarded, if not entirely stopped, for a time. The channels of benevolence would be partially dried. Our devoted missionaries would have to return from the heathen. The churches gathered among the heathen would languish and die. The mission schools would be disbanded, and thousands of precious youth now collected in them be given up to the delusion, wretchedness, and ruin of heathenism. And the advantage gained against the powers of darkness in heathen lands would be lost. And gross darkness would soon again cover those spots where now the light of life beams up amid surrounding gloom. And the perishing millions of the pagan world would be left, at least by the Presbyterian Church, with but little effort for their rescue, to sink down to woe. And the poor slave, on whose account all this evil had been wrought, would be far less likely to obtain a knowledge of salvation than at present. The

south, having lost the aid of the northern part of the Church in the powerful influence of rational, calm, anti-slavery testimony, and being exasperated by unjust denunciation, would be much less able and less willing to labor for the liberation or salvation of the slaves than now. And the opposition and exasperation produced by what would be deemed the ultraism of such a course, would most effectually preclude the possibility of the northern part of the Church laboring directly or efficiently for either of these ends. And all the testimony and argumentation upon the subject by the northern Church, would, through utter impotence—an impotence resulting from such uncalled for division—fail to reach the understanding and conscience of those personally engaged in slaveholding. So that incalculable injury would thus be done to the cause of Christ; and the condition of the slave, on whose account this course had been taken, would be rendered more hopeless far than at present. On the other hand, those who remain in the Church, through the confidence secured by the rational and correct position she occupies, may bear effective testimony against the evils of slavery. To the Church the field of effort on the behalf of the slaves is fully open, so that every one who desires it may give all his possession, cast the whole weight of his influence, and spend all his energies while he remains on earth, for their instruction and salvation. By the whole force of our obligation to avoid schism, and to labor as effectively as possible for the salvation of the slaves, are we bound to

remain in the Church. Secession is, therefore, positively sinful.

But is any aspect of the Protestant Church more constantly or contemptuously held up to derision and scorn, by Romanists and infidels, than her divisions? Are not these, by way of pre-eminence, the scandal of christianity? Where else do men of the world find so effectual an excuse for remaining out of the pale of the Church? Where else do infidels find an armory so well filled with polished, effective weapons to injure and almost ruin the cause of Christ? Through what other channel does the enemy so powerfully rush in like a flood? These, almost more than anything else, enervate the aggressive force of the Church, and lay open her fair domain to the incursions of deadly foes, leaving them to snatch, almost from her very arms, myriads of immortal souls, and plunge them down to darkness. These, almost more than anything else, obscure the light of truth, and leave multitudes enveloped in the darkness of moral night and eternal death, who else might have received the light of life. Can he be innocent who, except for the very strongest reasons, makes himself the occasion of such incalculable mischief? And this criminality seems, at least, greatly increased by the fact that at this very time an extended, extending, and earnest desire exists, and a strenuous effort is being made, to heal these divisions. No one can help but feel that it is a noble desire directed to a noble purpose. No ingenuous christian heart can but go out in prayer to God for his blessing to

crown with success that effort. How glorious beyond expression will be that day, when all denominational selfishness and sectarian bigotry and animosity shall cease, and the watchmen on Zion's walls see eye to eye, and all the children of God of every name go hand in hand in his service, for the spread of his gospel and the promotion of his glory. How painful, then, under these circumstances, to see these divisions multiply, and that for a reason that resembles an ignis-fatuus. These considerations show conclusively that secession, so far from being a duty, brings the guilt of schism, and of producing incalculable mischief to the cause of Christ and his gospel, and the spiritual interests of fallen man. It must, therefore, be sinful.

Some, however, have attempted to evade the force of this reasoning, by casting the odium and guilt of schism, and of all these evils, upon the Church. They contend that she has left her primitive position, and denied her primitive doctrine on the subject of slavery; has become pro-slavery, and is, therefore, corrupt to a much greater extent than formerly. They assert that they themselves hold the original faith, and maintain the early position of the Presbyterian Church on this subject; and, therefore, the schism is the act of the Church, and not theirs. But the assertion that the Church has denied its first faith is untrue. It has already been shown that the doctrines proclaimed at different times, from the beginning have been essentially coincident, and that the Church occupies precisely the same position in re-

ference to this subject which it has always held. The attempt to escape the charge of schism, by striving to fasten it upon the Church, is an entire failure. And it must ever be so until she shall depart, as it falsely charged she has departed, from truth and right. Those, therefore, who, on account of slavery, separate from the Presbyterian Church, with the view of establishing another sect, of proselyting from the Church, and thus producing divisions, are guilty of schism and all its consequent evils. Secession is, therefore, not a duty, but involves very great guilt.

But whilst it has been shown that we of the north do not necessarily partake of the guilt of slavery, and are under no obligation to forsake the Church on that account, it must not be inferred that we are, therefore, not concerned in its existence in the Church or in the land, or have no duty in reference to it. We are, as citizens, christians and philanthropists, deeply concerned. The system of slavery is an enormous evil, in every possible aspect. It is an evil politically and commercially. It is an evil socially and morally. It is an evil to the section in which it prevails, and to the whole nation. It is an evil to the master and the slave. It is a mighty evil, as it opposes a powerful obstacle to the progress of the gospel, that effectual panacea which God has been pleased to provide for every human wo; that only guide to eternal bliss which is given to erring man. It is an evil, as its wrongs will, with every precaution that can be used, find an occasional entrance into

the Church, marring its beauty and weakening its power.

In view of its political and social evil, no patriot or philanthropist can but long for its entire removal, and feel that he is bound to labor for this end. No lover of his species can look upon the degradation it brings upon the slave, and the temptation to moral degeneracy which it presents before the master, and not feel constrained to lift his voice, and exert his influence for its final abolition. No ingenuous christian can view the miseries which it inflicts, and see how it mars the beauty of Zion, steels the hearts of masters, and stupifies the minds of slaves against the gospel, and erects a mighty barrier to the progress of the kingdom of Christ, and not feel his spirit moved within him, or be constrained to labor in every prudent and effective way, and to the extent of his power, for its removal from the earth. We all have duties in reference to it. We are bound to bear testimony against the system with all its evils, as they exist either in Church or State, or both. Our influence, and every rational effort should be given, in the spheres in which we severally live and act, for its final destruction. But especially as the field is, in the orderings of divine providence, open, we should labor to give both masters and slaves the gospel, which is able to make them wise unto salvation. For the promotion of this work, our prayers should ascend, our influence be exerted, our substance be contributed, and our personal efforts be given. As, therefore, we cannot innocently separate from the Pres-

byterian Church on account of slavery, so we cannot, without sin, remain in it and neglect to exert ourselves vigorously, both for the salvation of the slaves, and the complete abolition of the entire system of slavery.

APPENDIX:

CONTAINING THE POSITION AND TESTIMONY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN (NEW SCHOOL), REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN, ASSOCIATE, ASSOCIATE REFORMED, PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL, METHODIST EPISCOPAL, AND BAPTIST CHURCHES.

It will be seen that the first four of the following papers are official. The others, although not official, have been obtained from reliable sources. They may all be relied upon, therefore, as giving a correct exhibit of the views and position of the bodies to which they refer.

THE POSITION AND TESTIMONY OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (NEW SCHOOL.)

This body had its origin in a secession from the Presbyterian Church, in the year 1838. Its General Assembly, therefore, claim, that all the testimony borne prior to that period by the General Assembly is their testimony upon the subject of slavery. Since the separation of that body from the

Presbyterian Church, the subject has been frequently before its highest judicatory. Several papers have been passed, expressing essentially the same general sentiment. The last of these, passed in 1850, and now, of course, regarded as the authoritative declaration of the body, is as follows, viz.:

“*Resolved*, 1st, That we deeply deplore the working of the whole system of American slavery, interwoven as it is with the policy of the slaveholding States, and with the social and domestic life of their citizens; and regarding it, as in former years we have explicitly stated, to be fraught with serious injury to the civil, political, intellectual, and moral interests of society, and leading to much sin, we declare it to be in all cases, where the laws of the State, the obligations of guardianship, and the demands of humanity, do not render it *unavoidable*, an offence in the proper sense of that term, as used in our Book of Discipline, chap. 1, sec. 3.

“2. *Resolved*, That while we regard all cases in which the holding of slaves is sinful, a matter for the exercise of such discipline as falls within the proper jurisdiction of the inferior church courts or sessions; yet, as our constitution declares, ‘the exercise of discipline in such a manner as to edify the Church, requires not only much of the spirit of piety, but also much prudence and discretion,’ and, therefore, ‘it becomes the rulers of the Church to take into view all the circumstances which may give a different character to conduct, and render it more or less offensive, and which may of course

require a very different mode of proceeding in similar cases, at different times, for the attainment of the same end.' Book of Dis. chap. 1, sec. 5.

"These obligations we cannot disrespect or violate, without a breach of the covenant binding us in visible unity under the acknowledged authority of the Book of Discipline. That constitution prescribes the modes and processes of discipline so distinctly, that any attempt at a summary withdrawal from fellowship, or declarative condemnation, legislative excinding, or censure pronounced, in respect of particular Synods, Presbyteries, churches, or their members, without a due and careful investigation of charges preferred, and proof of guilt adduced, conformably to its provisions, is just as contrary to our covenant, as it is repugnant to the obligations of christian courtesy, the dictates of common justice, and the positive precepts of the Word of God.

"The powers of the General Assembly, and of all inferior judicatories, are carefully defined in our Book of Discipline. To the Church Session exclusively pertains 'the spiritual government of the congregation,' 'the power to inquire into the knowledge and christian conduct of the members of the Church,' and consequently to judge of the qualifications for membership, and to admit to the fellowship of the Church. The Word of God is the law; and the Confession of Faith, and the larger and shorter Catechisms, which set forth our acknowledged and covenant agreement as to what that Word teaches, is the accepted conventional aid to

direct in the exercise of that judgment. All the qualifications and terms of membership to be respected are to be found in them. To prescribe those not dictated by Jesus Christ, is usurpation, and tends to render the Church a mere human constitution, organized and governed at the caprice of men. No power is conceded to any of our Church courts to make laws to bind the conscience, or to establish tests of character not authorized by the Word of God, and its exposition in our constitutional standards. The General Assembly has no legislative authority to bind or coerce inferior judicatories, any more than a Church Session has the members. The powers of the Assembly are either advisory and commendatory as to general interests, or appellate, or supervisory in the way of review and control, under the provisions of the constitution. Beyond these, its powers are wholly those of moral influence, such as pertains to wise, kind, consistent, and Scriptural testimony and advice. It is not competent to declare a withdrawal of fellowship from any of its churches or members by a mere legislative act, or by a resolution, where there has not been a trial, the conviction of the guilty and evidences of fault, or incipient apostasy. Where among our churches God gives tokens of his Spirit's presence, where also revivals of genuine religion are enjoyed, and the fruits of holiness are found, it would merit the divine rebuke to cast out as heathen men and publicans, those whom the Lord approves. Whatever may be the power of the General Assembly in the way of testimony

against this, it can never reach to Church Sessions and members, and pronounce summary and declarative judgment on persons individually or collectively.

“This would be to make the supreme court assume the attitude of accuser, to violate vested and covenant rights, and to abdicate its legitimate and constitutional power as ‘the bond of union, peace, correspondence, and mutual confidence among all our churches.’ Therefore,

“3. *Resolved*, That while the General Assembly are constitutionally incompetent, by legislative acts, to excind any of their Synods, Presbyteries, churches, or members, or to pronounce their condemnation of persons and churches, except in the exercise of appellate jurisdiction; or even to know the disciplinary action of inferior courts, and the condition of the churches, except as they may be particularly and officially informed, they can testify, ‘exhort and entreat with all long-suffering and gentleness,’—speaking the truth in love and in the spirit of Christ.

“In this spirit we repeat our former testimonies; and while on the one hand we beseech the churches more immediately brought into contact with the evils of slavery, to watch and guard most carefully against the admission and retention in their fellowship of unworthy members, if there are any, and to endeavor to preserve and promote their purity; on the other hand, we earnestly entreat that those who feel afflicted by the dreadful and atrocious evils of slavery, existing in the States where human

beings are by law declared and held as chattels, and bought and sold as merchandise, would carefully guard against being embittered towards such of their brethren as may be surrounded, embarrassed, and often frustrated in their good desires and designs, by a stern force of law they cannot control; and that they would extend to them their prayers and sympathies, and fraternal co-operation for the prosperity of the Church, and the best interests of humanity.

ACTION OF THE NEW SCHOOL ASSEMBLY, 1851.

The Assembly resolved, "That the Assembly have reason to be thankful to divine Providence for the wisdom and prudence vouchsafed to the last Assembly, in coming to conclusions on this vexed question, which have so generally met with the acquiescence of the Church, at this crisis; and that it seems obviously our privilege and duty at the present session, to leave the whole subject as it was placed by that action, and to devote our time to other subjects which demand attention; always praying that God will hasten on the day of universal freedom throughout our land and the world."

TESTIMONY OF FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

“Whereas, in this country, the sin of slave holding prevails to an alarming extent, perniciously influencing all the action of the Church, either immediately or remotely connected with human rights, it is, therefore, deemed necessary, in adopting a form of government, to make a distinct declaration on that subject.

DECLARATION.

“1. God has made of one blood all nations of men, consequently, all human beings endowed with rationality, have an equal right to freedom.

“2. The holding of human beings as property, is destructive of all the ends for which man was created and endowed with rational powers, and, consequently, one of the greatest evils that can be inflicted upon human nature, highly immoral, and entirely inconsistent with christian character and profession.

“3. No person holding slaves, or advocating the rightfulness of slave-holding, can be a member of this body.

“4. That no Church, Presbytery, or Synod tolerating slave-holders, or the advocates of slave-holding, in its communion, can be a constituent part of this body.”

TESTIMONY OF THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBY-
TERIAN CHURCH.

The Associate Reformed Church exists in three distinct Synods, the Synods of the West, South, and North. These Synods receive the same ecclesiastical standards as to doctrine, worship, and government, but exist independently of each other, having no formal bond of union. The Southern Synod has never issued any testimony against slavery, distinct from what is contained in the general principles of the Confession of Faith. But it is well known that slavery exists in that portion of the Church.

In the Synod of the West, slavery has no existence. The Synod has, however, borne testimony on the subject. In May, 1826, a committee was appointed to report upon the subject, and especially as to the propriety of making it a term of communion. An elaborate report, condemning slavery, was made, and by the Synod transmitted to the Presbyteries, with a view of securing their judgment upon it. The subject was, to some extent, discussed in the Synod of 1828, and also of 1829. In 1829 a committee, appointed for the purpose, reported a set of resolutions upon the subject. After considerable discussion, the whole subject was postponed until the next year. In 1830 the following preamble and resolutions were adopted, as expressive of the views of the Synod, viz.:

“Whereas, the religion of Christ recognizes the

original equality of mankind, and considers as evil every thing in the practices of men which unnecessarily disturbs the rights of their fellow men, and also the practices of men may often disturb the natural rights or welfare of others, from the necessity of the circumstances, when the sin is in some antecedent cause, which inflicted upon them such a state of things; and as slavery is believed to be, in many cases, such an evil, and further, as it would not comport with the laws of Christ's house to exclude the slave-owner in such circumstances from the communion of the Church; therefore,

“1. *Resolved*, That the religion of Jesus Christ requires, that involuntary slavery should be removed from the Church, as soon as an opportunity, in the providence of God, is afforded to slave owners for the liberation of their slaves.

“2. *Resolved*, That when there are no regulations of the State to prohibit it, when provision can be made for the support of the freedmen, when they can be placed in circumstances to support the rank, enjoy the rights, and discharge the duties of freemen, it shall be considered that such an opportunity is offered in the providence of God.

“3. *Resolved*, That Synod will, as it hereby does, recommend it to all its members, to aid in placing the slaves that are within the jurisdiction of this Synod, in the possession of their rights as freemen; and that it be especially recommended to them to take up annual collections to aid the Amer-

ican society for colonizing the free people of color of the United States.

“4. *Resolved*, That the practice of selling or of buying slaves for gain, by any member of this Church, be disapproved; and that slave owners, under the jurisdiction of this Synod, be, and they hereby are, forbidden all aggravations of the evils of slavery, by violating the ties of nature in the separation of husband and wife, parents and children, or by civil or unkind treatment; and that they shall not only treat them well, but also instruct them in useful knowledge, and the principles of the christian religion, and in all respects treat them as enjoined upon masters toward their servants, by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

These resolutions were differently interpreted by different persons. Therefore, the Synod, in 1832, sent forth the following letter warning against the sin of slavery, as an exposition of the foregoing resolutions, viz.:

Though the subject of slavery has been for several years agitated in our Church, and very recently decided, yet there are several reasons why we should make it a matter of public testimony at this time.

“Owing to the rebellion and massacre which occurred in Virginia a little more than a year ago, the subject has become one of great interest and anxiety to the whole nation, but particularly to the southern and slave-holding States. In these, slavery is more than ever felt to be a great political evil, fraught with danger. A feeling of excitement

and alarm has become general, and in some of those States, the public mind has been aroused to consider the best measures for the final removal of the evil, and the subject of the abolition of slavery has been publicly discussed. But in all this, slavery has been viewed almost entirely in its civil and political bearings. Its moral iniquity needs to be pointed out. People should be called to look upon their sin before God, in this matter, and taught to consider those alarming consequences of slavery as the retributive visitations of the Lord, who "executeth righteousness and judgment for the oppressed." Now if this is not done by the Church of God, by whom shall it be done, and what juncture so favorable as the present, when slavery is felt to be an evil, and a desire to be delivered from it generally prevails? So far, then, as our influence extends, it behooves us, as one branch of the Church of God, to do our duty.

"God is visiting our land with one of his 'sore judgments'—the *pestilence*. This visitation is a call from the Supreme Ruler to our nation, to consider their ways and repent; and when such a call is given, it is the duty of the Church, whose business it is to sustain the cause of God and righteousness on earth, to point out those national sins for which the righteous Lord inflicts national judgment. Now, one prominent national sin—on account of which, as well as on account of Sabbath breaking, intemperance, and evil speaking—the Lord is visiting our country, is slavery.

"Another is, that the resolutions which we have

passed are, by many, considered too indefinite; and it appears that they are differently construed by different persons. We, therefore, consider it our duty to declare, in language not to be misunderstood, our views of the moral turpitude of slavery, and of the duty of christians concerning it.

“In framing these resolutions, two objects were kept in view. The first was, the condemnation of slavery, and of every person who wilfully persisted in the practice of it. The second was, to spare those persons who were convinced of the immorality of slavery, and desirous to free themselves of all connection with it, but who were, by the force of circumstances which they could not control, prevented from liberating their slaves; and, instead of excluding them from the Church immediately, and on the simple ground of their having slaves, to give them time to effect their emancipation.

“Accordingly, the preamble to these resolutions first declares the original equality of men, and the consequent iniquity of that system which deprives those persons, who are held as slaves, of their rights. The language of the preamble is: ‘The religion of Jesus Christ recognizes the original equality of mankind, and considers as evil everything in the practices of men which unnecessarily disturbs the rights of their fellow men.’ In using the term ‘*unnecessarily*,’ the Synod had not the remotest idea of sustaining the tyrants plea of necessity, for justifying the voluntary slave-holder. No; the Synod had, at its previous meeting, which was a full one, declared that it was ‘unanimous in

the opinion that slavery, as it exists in the slaveholding States of these United States, is a great, not only political, but moral evil, and that the religion of Jesus Christ calls upon all christians to remove the evil, as soon as it can be done without worse consequences to society, and to the slaves themselves. Here slavery, not as a mere abstraction which has no existence, but as it exists in these United States, is declared, by the unanimous voice of the Synod, to be a *moral evil*, and, therefore, to be removed from the Church. The only difference in views was, 'as to the measures which are proper to remove the evil;' and the ultimate decision was deferred, in order that more time might be had, not for investigating the moral character of the evil, but for 'consideration and maturing of plans' for its removal. The Synod is, therefore, to be considered as condemning slavery as a moral evil, which the religion of the Bible requires all christians to remove, as soon as practicable, and as pledged to devise and execute the best plans for its removal.

"Against slavery, as a flagrant moral evil, the Synod does now testify :

"1. *Because it deprives men of their inalienable rights.* 'God has made of one blood all men to dwell on all the face of the earth.' The African is created equal with the white, and endowed with the same rights. These rights involve everything. Stript of them he is unprotected and exposed, without the power of redress to the cruelty, cupidity, and caprice of others. It is, therefore, the highest imaginable injustice. It wrongs its unhappy sub-

ject of his all. These rights do not cease upon the man's being reduced to slavery, but continue while he lives; so that he is guilty who wilfully holds him deprived of them, as well as he who first took them away.

“2. *Because of its attendant cruelties.* It separates the nearest relations, even those whom God hath joined together in marriage, and whom no man may put asunder. By placing them in the power of covetous, wrathful, implacable, and unmerciful men, it subjects them to the worst injuries, and hardships, and woes, as the annals of slavery can show. It is admitted that there are those who treat their slaves humanely; but it is essential to the system that many treat them inhumanely; and no man can hold slaves without their being liable, either in their own persons or their descendants, or both, in the event of his decease or insolvency, to pass into other hands, and so become exposed to the worst ills of their condition.

“3. *Because of its immoral tendency.* It discourages marriage, and encourages prostitution and promiscuous concubinage among the slaves. It, therefore, poisons their morals at the fountain. It forbids their education, and keeps them sunk in ignorance. It precludes the parental instruction of children. It generates in the slave an abject and degraded spirit. It leads to the practice of remorseless theft, which is almost universal, and to the very general breach of the Sabbath. With the master, it promotes idleness, luxury, and pride; it fosters an overbearing and tyrannical temper, together

with anger and resentment, and encourages profligacy. Such being the tendency of slavery, it opposes the progress of the gospel, the growth and prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the salvation of souls.

“4. *Because of the connection of slavery with the slave trade.* It is our domestic slavery that keeps up the slave trade, both foreign and inter-territorial. If slavery were to cease, the demand for slaves would cease—the market, the smuggling, the capture would cease. It deserves consideration, that in spite of the laws of the civilized world, the slave trade is very extensively carried on, and slaves are smuggled in wherever there is a demand for them. And, in order to conceal themselves from detection, the masters of slave-ships practice more shocking barbarities now than ever. Now, that which lies at the foundation of all this, is slavery, and it has been as good as demonstrated, that the slave trade and its horrors will cease only with slavery. The inter-territorial slave-trade is carried on very extensively from the south-eastern to the south-western States, and is attended with much, not only degrading, but revolting to humanity. Every man who holds slaves lends the force of his example in favor of the system, and employs whatever amount he possesses, in this species of property, to keep up the demand which supports the slave-trade. He may not do so *intentionally*—probably very few do—but he does so in *effect*. And shall christians do this? Shall the Church

permit them to do this, when they can possibly help themselves. By no means.

“Therefore, because slavery deprives men of their inalienable rights; because of its attendant cruelties; because of its immoral tendency; and because of its supporting the slave-trade, with all its iniquity and horrors, we do condemn it as contrary to the word of God and the spirit of the christian religion, by which we are taught to consider all men as made of one blood and created equal; to render all their due; to do justly and love mercy; to be kind and tender hearted; to do good to all men; to give to the servants that which is just and equal; to cherish that love which worketh no ill to his neighbor; to love our neighbor as ourselves, and all things whatsoever we would that men should do to us, to do even the same to them. When God commands to ‘loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke,’ Isa. 58: 6—when he cries, ‘Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor’s service without wages, and that giveth him not for his work,’ Jer. 22: 13—and when he threatens to ‘come and be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, and turn aside the stranger from his rights,’ Mal. 3: 5—he deserves attention from both slave-holding individuals and slave-holding communities.

“While these things are so, we can yet conceive of persons who are in possession of slaves, contrary

to their will and desire, and from the necessity of circumstances which they cannot control; and who are sincerely desirous of embracing the first opportunity of emancipating their slaves, in a manner consistent with their welfare and the good of society. Such persons we would not condemn as guilty of slave-holding—we would not exclude them on the simple ground that they are in possession of slaves—we would give them a reasonable time to effect their emancipation. But such persons will manifest their desire—they will treat their slaves with kindness and humanity—they will use care in instructing them in useful and religious knowledge—they will endeavor to prepare them for freedom—they will sedulously strive to overcome all obstacles to their emancipation, to effect which they will show a willingness to incur personal and pecuniary sacrifices. When a man sets about the work of emancipating his slaves, it can hardly be concealed. Now it is in this sense that the Synod understand, and desire to be understood, the latter clause of the preamble, which reads thus: ‘The practices of men may often disturb the natural rights or welfare of others from the necessity of their circumstances, when the sin is in some antecedent cause which inflicted on them such a state of things; and slavery is, in many cases, such an evil, and it would not comport with the laws of Christ’s house to exclude the slave-owner, in such circumstances, from the communion of the Church.’ Now, this very exception in favor of such as are ‘slave-owners from the necessity of their circumstances,’ infers the

condemnation of every voluntary slave-holder, *who buys, sells, or holds slaves, for the sake of gain, or profit, or ease, or any other selfish purpose, when he can restore his slaves to freedom.* Accordingly, the first resolution declares, ‘that the religion of Jesus Christ requires, that involuntary slavery should be removed from the Church, as soon as an opportunity, in the providence of God, is afforded to slave owners for the liberation of their slaves.’ Here we declare it to be the duty of all slave owners, under our jurisdiction, to embrace the first opportunity which is offered to them, to liberate their slaves, that the evil of slavery may, as soon as practicable, be removed from the Church.

“We then declare when it will be considered that such an opportunity is afforded, viz.: ‘When there are no regulations of the State to prohibit it; when provision can be made for the support of the freedmen; when they can be placed in circumstances to support the rank, enjoy the rights, and discharge the duties of freemen.’ Now, although many of the States have thrown obstacles in the way of emancipation, in order to prevent the increase of free blacks, yet slaves are every year emancipated and colonized, from those whose laws are most rigid on the subject. In the colony of Liberia, the emancipated are placed in circumstances to support the rank, enjoy the rights, and discharge the duties of freemen; and that colony could soon receive all the slaves within the jurisdiction of this Synod—and provision can be made for their transportation and support there for the first six months,

(after which they can support themselves,) in part, perhaps, from the funds of the colonization society ; in part from the liberality of the Associate Reformed congregations, by directing their annual contributions for colonization purposes to that object ; in part, sometimes, out of the abundance of the slave owner ; and, if necessary, the whole, by hiring out the slave till he would earn enough.

“ In the third resolution, the Synod recommends it to all its members, to aid slave-holders under its jurisdiction, in placing their slaves in the possession of their rights as freemen, and to contribute to the cause of colonization in general.

“ The fourth and last resolution formally condemns the practice of buying or selling slaves for gain ; and then provides for the humane treatment, religious instruction, &c., of slaves, until they can be liberated. A man may buy a slave for the purpose of delivering him from a cruel master, or of placing him along with his wife and children, or of emancipating him ; but all buying for gain is condemned. And there are some instances in which a man may sell, and not for gain ; but all selling of slaves as an article of traffic, of speculation, or of gain, is disapproved.

“ Now, brethren, it is expected that these resolutions shall not lie as a dead letter, but be respected and reduced to practice. It is expected that Presbyteries and Sessions will see them enforced. It is expected that slave owners in the Church will make conscience of seeking and improving opportunities, and the very first which shall offer, of lib-

erating their slaves. It is expected that, in the mean time, they will give satisfactory evidence to their respective Sessions, that they do consider slavery a moral evil, and that they do truly desire to get rid of it as soon as they can, and that it is their intention to embrace the first opportunity which God in his providence shall give them of so doing. It is expected of Sessions that they will require this of slave owning church members, or applicants. It is likewise expected, that all members of the Church will take an interest in restoring the slaves which are within our jurisdiction, to the enjoyment of their rights as freemen, and will aid their brethren who are in possession of them, in this good work. It is expected that no member of the Church will countenance the iniquitous system of slavery, by buying or selling for gain, and especially that no one will sell to an ungodly master or a trader. It is expected that no one will separate husband and wife, or parents and children, or exercise cruel or unkind treatment; but that all will instruct their slaves, until they can effectuate their liberty, in useful knowledge, and in the principles of the gospel. It is expected that Church Sessions will see that these things are duly observed."

In 1838, the second of the above series of resolutions was so amended as to read thus:

"That an opportunity in the providence of God, shall be considered as afforded, when the master can emancipate his slave, and place him in circum-

stances where he shall not be liable to be immediately sold into bondage.”

In 1839 the following action was taken :

“On the memorial from certain persons in the congregation of Robinson’s Run, in relation to slavery and the Colonization Society, the following resolution was adopted, viz.:

“That as there are two conflicting societies operating in the community, the Colonization and Anti-slavery societies, and as this Synod has recommended the former to the patronage of the churches under its care, and as it is desirable that this Synod keep clear of this excitement, and as the Church should not be involved by the operation of bodies over which it has no control ; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That it hereby withdraw the recommendation formerly given to the Colonization Society.”

TESTIMONY AND CONDUCT OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

For the following statement of the testimony and practice of this body, we are indebted to a venerable father in the ministry, who has for a great many years held a prominent place among his brethren :

“This Church, while recognizing the legitimacy

of the relation of master and servant, has always borne testimony against slavery, as defined in the slave laws of the States, and colonies before they were States, of our country. But until the latter part of the eighteenth century, that testimony was not formally judicative. It was given in the usual course of the ministrations of the sanctuary. At that time, however, (the latter part of the last century) the subject was judicially acted on, and slavery, as defined by the slave laws of slave-holding States and their courts, was formally condemned as a personal, domestic, political, and moral evil; and slave-holding, and the approbation of it, as thus defined, excluded from the sacramental fellowship of the Church. During the present century, no slave-holder, or advocate of slavery on the chattel principle, has been admitted to the *ecclesiastical* connection of this department of the Church. Such is the *position* and such the *conduct* of this portion of the Presbyterian family on this subject.

“It ought to be remarked, perhaps, that this body has never denounced, as immoral *per se*, the right of property by one person in another, nor yet involuntary service as wrong. These, under legitimate regulations, may belong to the nearest relations of life. These do not constitute the slavery of the slave laws of the country. To confound them with it may perplex, but cannot enlighten.

“In reference to the influence of this measure upon the prosperity of the body, it may be stated, that, at the time, it generally secured the disappro-

bation of other religious bodies, as indiscreet, if not wrong. It occasioned the loss of those, as members, who refused to comply with that measure, they finding an open door for their reception in other ecclesiastical connections. Upon our organizations in the slave States, it has not been propitious. Whilst at no time, on the part of the public functionaries of the States, was there any disposition to bear hardly or unkindly on Reformed Presbyterians, they being uniformly recognized as ardent patriots and good citizens; yet the existence, maintainance, and general operation of the slave laws were, in many respects, unpleasant to them. Hence the great body of this denomination, with their ministers, were induced to seek a more eligible home in the free States. This step affected the locality, rather than the number of professors.

“But to the picture there is another side, and of it the following may be said :

“The Church is free, and for nearly half a century has been free, from the malign influence that goes to degrade the moral and immortal being to the class of chattels, made legally incapable of personal relations and rights. The self-denial evinced, both in the north and the south, in the ready emancipation of slaves by those who entered into the views of the Church, had a happy influence upon others in many respects. Occasion was given to numbers of the consistent friends of rational freedom, upon examination, to enter into the fellowship of the Church. This department of Zion is now, and has long been, exempt from that

unhappy state of agitation which at present so extensively disturbs the peace of others. With us it is not a novelty, but a long settled matter.

“It may not be out of place to remark, that whilst this was the department of the Presbyterian family that first took such ground and action on the subject of slavery, there was no rashness in the measure. The degrading and cruel chattel principle was repudiated, and made a subject of ecclesiastical, corrective discipline. The legitimate relation of master and servant remained untouched. Provision was made that the aged, the infirm, and minors be taken care of; and, while the relation of superior and subordinate remained, the subordinate was secured in all personal rights, which the condition of the individual morally required or admitted. In this case there was no social convulsion.”

TESTIMONY OF THE ASSOCIATE CHURCH.

The following resolutions and recommendations exhibit the position and conduct of the Associate Church in reference to slavery. These resolutions were passed by the Synod, the supreme judicatory of that body, in 1831. They are as follows:

“1. *Resolved*, That as slavery is clearly condemned by the law of God, and has long since been judicially declared to be a moral evil by this Church, no member thereof shall, from and after

this date, be allowed to hold a human being in the character and condition of a slave.

“2. *Resolved*, That this Synod do hereby order all its subordinate judicatories to proceed forthwith to carry into execution the intention of the foregoing resolution, by requiring those church members, under their immediate inspection, who may *be possessed of* slaves, to relinquish their unjust claims, and release those whom they have heretofore considered as their property.

“3. *Resolved*, That if any member or members of this Church, in order to evade this act, shall sell any of their slaves, or make a transfer of them, so as to retain the proceeds of their services, or the price of their sale, or in any other way evade the provisions of this act, they shall be subject to the censures of the Church.

“4. *Resolved, further*, That where an individual is found who has spent so much of his or her strength in the service of another, as to be disqualified from providing for his or her own support, the master, in such a case, is to be held responsible for the comfortable maintenance of said servants.

“That the foregoing resolutions may be carried into full effect, the Synod do agree to recommend to persons holding slaves in our communion, that the following directions be observed :

“1. Let slaves be manumitted at home, when this can be done in agreeableness with State enactments.

“2. Let slaves be removed, or, let families, to-

gether with their slaves, remove to non-slave-holding States.

- “3. Let the slaves be sent to Liberia, or delivered over to the agent of the American Colonization Society, or sent to the colony of colored people in Upper Canada, in cases where it shall be found most practicable; and, in order to this, Synod will appoint an agent, to whom masters are to make known their willingness to part with their slaves, without remuneration; and said agent will be authorized to collect funds in such manner as he shall judge best, and disburse them in defraying the expenses of the removal of such slaves to the place of their destination, provided, always, the consent of the slave be obtained.

“4. Let any member of this Church purchase slaves from owners, not of this Church, and give them their liberty, or retain them in their service until compensated by their labor for the sum expended in their redemption. Also, let masters contract with their slaves and pay them just wages for a limited time, until remunerated for the expense of raising and educating them, if any such remuneration be in justice due, which matter is to be determined by the master and slaves themselves, but, in case they cannot agree, by some disinterested individuals by them chosen. Moreover, in order to prevent a reversion to a state of slavery in such cases, the slaves shall be delivered by bills of sale to the agent of Synod above mentioned, who shall give an approved security that those slaves shall not

be taken from their masters, nor come into the power of another owner, till liberated.

“5. Let pastors, settled in those States where slave-holding exists, instruct the congregations under their care in the evil of that practice, and urge them to a discharge of their duty respecting it; let Sessions also take care that the above resolutions and directions be duly observed in the admission of members to the fellowship of the Church, and in their practice afterwards; and also let them acquaint the slaves with what the Synod has now done in behalf of their natural rights and privileges.”

POSITION OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH.

The Baptist denomination is strictly congregational in its government. Its ministerial associations are small, and have no general ecclesiastical bond of union among themselves. Formerly its missionary society constituted a bond of union. But in this respect a separation occurred a few years since between the north and the south. There exists, therefore, no testimony which can be regarded as a general expression of the body on the subject of slavery.

There are four distinct classes, as it regards this subject, among the Baptists. Northern Baptists are almost universally opposed to slavery, and regard it as a very great evil. But among these there are

two classes. The one occupies moderate anti-slavery ground, and is not opposed to the use of funds contributed by slave-holders for missionary purposes. The other takes a stronger position, has formed a free missionary association, and refuses the application of any money contributed by slave-holders for the spread of the gospel.

In the south there are also two classes, although, so far as they engage in the work of missions, they all operate through one association. A majority of southern Baptists are opposed to the slave system, but admit slave-holders to the communion of the Church. But a considerable class justify the system, and plead for its perpetuity. The Baptists of the south labor with commendable zeal for the salvation of the slaves. The Church has a colored membership of more than one hundred thousand.

The Free Will Baptists are strongly opposed to slavery. At their last General Conference (1850) they passed a series of very stringent resolutions in opposition to the fugitive slave law. From these it is gathered that they would not admit slave-holders to membership in the Church. They have no congregations in slave-holding States.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

The General Convention of this body have not taken any action which defines formally their views

upon the subject of slavery. Several of the southern bishops have made the religious instruction of the colored population, the matter of special and repeated address to the clergy of their dioceses. There is, among this people, a general opposition to the system, but slave-holders are admitted to membership in the Church.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

This body was divided, a few years since, on the account of slavery, into northern and southern sections. These sections now constitute independent bodies, having no formal bond of union or correspondence, and but little intercourse with each other. The Methodist Episcopal Church North claim to hold the original views, and occupy the original position, of the Church on this subject. The following is the official statement of this doctrine. Book Dis. pp. 195-6:

*“Quest.—*What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery?

“Ans.—1. We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery; therefore, no slave-holder shall be eligible to any official station in our Church hereafter, where the laws of the State in which he lives will admit of emancipation, and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom.

“2. When any travelling preacher becomes an owner of a slave or slaves, by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our Church, unless he execute, if it be practicable, a legal emancipation of such slaves, conformably to the laws of the State in which he lives.

“3. All our preachers shall prudently enforce upon our members the necessity of teaching their slaves to read the word of God ; and to allow them time to attend upon the public worship of God on our regular days of divine service.

“4. Our colored preachers, and official members, shall have all the privileges which are usual to others, in the district and quarterly conferences, where the usages of the country do not forbid it. And the presiding elder may hold for them a separate district conference, where the number of colored local preachers will justify it.

“5. The annual conferences may employ colored preachers to travel and preach, where their services are judged necessary ; provided, that no one shall be so employed without having been recommended according to the form of discipline.”

This doctrinal statement is also still held as authoritative in the M. E. Church South.

At the time of the division there were a few slave-holders in the northern section. But these are understood to be pledged to emancipate their slaves as soon as practicable.

Slave-holders are admitted to membership in the M. E. Church South. This body is also energetically laboring for the salvation of the slaves. It

has a larger colored membership than belongs to any other denomination in this country.

The Lutheran German Reformed and Associate Reformed churches in the south, both admit slaveholders to their communion. But neither of them, it is believed, has borne any formal testimony upon the subject. The same remarks are true of the congregational Church in the south.

Although the slave system, in its establishment and perpetuation, is a curse, yet God, in his wonder-working providence, is bringing good out of it for its wretched victims. Even the more ignorant and degraded of them, are not in a more disadvantageous or wretched condition, than they would have been in the wilds of Africa. And many of them are civilized and polished in their manners, and some have obtained a tolerable education. And a majority of them are furnished with the necessities and the ordinary comforts of life, in most respects, and are not subjected to severer toil than the poor of other countries. But what is of infinitely more value is, that multitudes of them have found the pearl of great price. Many have already gone to glory. And many others are pressing thither. The M. E. Church South reported, in 1849, a colored membership of 137,528. In 1847 the Baptist Church was regarded as having about 100,000 colored members. The Presbyterian Church has a black membership of about 7,000. There are also a few colored members in the Protestant Episcopal, the Associate Reformed, the New School Presbyterian, the Lutheran, the German Reformed, and

the congregational churches of the south. These together may number 15,000. Thus it appears that 260,000 of these children of Ham, are members of the visible Church. This is as large a number as have been converted by all the missionary operations of the last fifty years. It is presumed that there are three millions of slaves in this country. Of these, three-fifths will of course be children and youth. The remaining two-fifths would be one million and two hundred thousand. Now if this sum be divided by 260,000, the quotient will be about $4\frac{2}{3}$. The number of professors of religion, bears to the whole number of adult slaves, therefore, the proportion of one to less than $4\frac{2}{3}$. This is a proportion nearly, if not quite, as large as that which holds among the white population of the free States.

THE END.